

Disjunctions and contradictions:
An exploration of my childhood migration
experience through visual art.

Volume One

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of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or part to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

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ABSTRACT

In this study I explored the question ‘What does my art portray about my experience of being a child migrant?’ My response to the question was achieved through an exploration of visual images which I created for the study. The work is presented in two volumes: Volume One consists of the written component of the study, while Volume Two contains facsimiles of the art work.

I undertook this study with the belief that an understanding of how children experienced their migration can benefit those who interact with them as well as those involved in the planning and execution of the services they access in their daily life. Expanding the focus, depth and breadth of how child migration is perceived can, potentially, enhance a child migrant’s development, and assist them to contribute in myriad ways to the well-being and development of the country in which they live.

The concepts of aesthetic experience and the indivisibility of art underpinned the research processes I developed for this study. They informed the creation of my art, how I contemplated my images and the identification of themes. The four themes that I explored were, ‘The pervasive power of language’, ‘An unknown self’, ‘A void’ and ‘The loss of home’. My exploration of these themes constituted my answer to the research question. I revealed that my migration experience was characterized by disjunction, contradiction and paradox.

The findings of the study may entice parents to ‘see’ the migrant experience through their children’s eyes and, thus, strengthen ties between child migrants and their parents. The tacit knowledge which teachers may absorb through viewing my art, and my discussion of them, has the potential to shift and diversify their approach to working with child migrants. For social workers and mental health professionals, the research processes I established modelled a way of working therapeutically with child migrants. They also illustrate connections that exist between research and therapy. Future researchers may utilize concepts articulated in the study to design research that explores child migration from an holistic perspective. Finally, the study offers an exemplar for other child migrants who may wish to explore their migration experience.

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CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE SCENE

All around us is the tinkle of china and the reassuring murmur of people politely conversing. I turn around to look at the man I've been seated next to at this conference dinner. We acknowledge each other with a smile, and anxiously wonder how to begin the conversation.

"Hello, my name is Jonathan."

"Pleased to meet you, I'm Carmella," I respond.

I watch as his eyes register this information: "That's an unusual name.

Are you from an Italian background? "

"No, actually Carmella is also an Israeli name, I was born there."

A small frown now appears between his eyes as he his gaze moves somewhat furtively over my hair, clothes and jewellery.

"Really! I never would have picked you as a migrant, you don't even have a hint of a foreign accent."

I smile, and think that he is too polite to add "and you don't look like you come from anywhere else."

I decide to offer some more information: "Well, I arrived in Melbourne when I was eight years old."

"Oh," he sighs, the furrows between his eyes softening, "then you are not a real migrant, you were just a child."

The phrase “you are not a migrant, you were just a child” has been levelled at me in countless ways since I reached adulthood. For me, these assertions exemplified, then and now, a denial of my status and, therefore, of my experience of being a child migrant. Thus, to a certain degree, the impetus for this study arose out of a desire to provide an informed response to these contentions.

My interest in portraying my migration experience, which is the focus of the study, commenced in earnest in the mid 1990s. Whilst rummaging in a second hand bookshop I came across a copy of an old ‘John and Betty’ primary school text. The ‘John and Betty’ books were published by the Victorian Education Department from 1952 until the early 1960s. The book that I found was the first in the series and was used by my first teacher in Melbourne to teach me to read English. After purchasing it I spent many hours pouring over its written text and illustrations, remembering people, songs, smells, images and emotions that related to my early years in Australia. This little book powerfully evoked a time in my life which I had rarely spoken about, let alone discussed, with anyone, but which clearly was, in some way, very alive within me.

My reaction led me to consider why I had hardly ever thought about my migration experience. It occurred to me that I lacked the ability to do so because, as an eight year old, I was unable to contextualize the event. I had no understanding of the prevailing conditions within Israel, Australia or my family. In writing about his childhood war experience, the Holocaust child survivor and psychiatrist, Paul Valent (1994) voiced a similar sentiment: “Children want to express their inner turmoil to the outside world. I started to write a book at the age of nine. I had to stop writing after a page and a half because I knew too little about the war and about myself” (p. 2). In other words, it may be problematic to write or even think about an experience in a vacuum. Also, I wondered how much of my migration experience I could have put into words at such a young age. At that age I was not fully proficient in Hebrew, my mother tongue, or English - the language of my new country. Thus, my ability to reflect on my experience may have been compromised from the outset.

In addition to these possibilities, I speculated on whether my apparent rapid assimilation into the Australian way of life, noted by my teachers, was viewed by the adults in my life as a sign that I had forgotten my migration experience. Consequently, I was seen to no longer

think about it. Certainly, as far as I can recall, the topic of my personal migration experience was never discussed in our home. The commonly held notion that children forget difficult episodes in their lives has been discussed in a general sense by the psychologist Moskowitz (1985). She noted that parents of children who were traumatized often think that “since you [the child] were only a child and can’t remember, it didn’t mean anything” (Moskowitz, 1985, p. 402). She discussed how such beliefs tend to discourage children from talking about their past with their family.

Finally, it occurred to me that it might have been very important for my parents to see their daughter happy and successful in her new life. This situation would have vindicated, to some extent, their decision to migrate. A book that recounts the stories of refugee migrants, ‘Tales from a suitcase’, contains a photograph of a migrant mother and her child looking at map of the world. The caption reads: “For refugee children innocence was the key to hope as their parents struggled with depression and grief” (Davies & Dal Bosco, 2001, p. 119). Whilst the circumstances of our migration were very different to those of refugees, I wondered if a similar need for a hopeful future might have unconsciously led to my parents’ reticence to speak about any aspects of my migration.

These ideas occupied my mind for a number of months. Finally, in an attempt to express ‘something’ about my migration I set about creating a number of small handmade artist books. These books are ‘one of a kind’ objects containing images and occasional written text which was realized in book form. The first book depicted my struggle to read English using the ‘John and Betty’ reader. As I continued to create the books the written content decreased until it disappeared altogether, leaving me with small image-filled books. As the process of creating the books came to an end I felt a strong need to share their contents and some of what I had learnt about my migration experience. In November, 1999, I mounted a small exhibition at the Jewish Museum of Australia, Gross Gallery, Melbourne. I saw this location as a congenial and ‘natural’ place for my work as I knew that a large proportion of Australian Jews were migrants and, therefore, might have come to Australia when they were children. Consequently, I felt that they may, in some way, relate to my work.

During the exhibition I was most heartened by the interest shown in my work by a number of adult child migrants. They spoke to me of difficulties they had experienced when they

arrived in Australia as children. Some noted that viewing my work unlocked their previously forgotten stories, feelings and images.

Many people were interested in one book titled 'The book that cannot be opened'. It was handmade and bound with wire. To me it represented all the aspects of my migration experience which I had neither the time nor the wherewithal to explore adequately when I had created it. This research constituted an attempt to metaphorically untangle the wires that bound this book and to turn the pages within.

CHAPTER TWO

INTRODUCING MY STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of migration is widespread and affects the lives of large numbers of people in Australia and overseas (Akhtar, 2011; Daniels, 2002; Jupp, 2007; Vo, 2006). My study focused on my experience of child migration at the age of eight from Israel to Australia. It explored the question: 'What do my art works portray about my experience of being a child migrant?'

I used a methodology that as far as I am aware has not been employed in research about child migration. It was an art based study in which visual art about my experience was explored using procedures drawn from a variety of disciplines, including education, social science, art therapy and contemporary art practice. These disciplines provided me with ways of creating art, contemplating my imagery and identifying themes. Each practice furnished me with a way of utilizing art in research, the elements of the images comprising the research data. These practices allowed me to stay true to the concept which underpinned the study, that of visual art as portrayal.

2.2 THE CONCEPTUAL PARAMETERS OF THE STUDY

My interpretation of the concepts 'portrayal', 'experience' and 'child migrant' were central to the way I undertook the study and are defined in the following three subsections. An exploration of the concepts that informed my understanding of art based research is then offered.

2.2.1 Portrayal

My art work sought to portray my experience of being child migrant. These portrayals consisted of a series of visual images. *The Australian Oxford Dictionary* (Moore, 2004) and *Macquarie Dictionary* (Butler, 2009) define portrayal as the creation of a likeness or graphic

description of something through words, movement or image. In this study portrayal was located within the field of visual art, specifically visual art of Western Civilization, within a conceptual framework embraced by numerous artists at work since the beginning of the twentieth century.

According to Camille (2003) and Hyman (2006), the notion of visual portrayal espoused by Plato, a classical Greek philosopher, informed the way visual art was conceptualized for centuries. Plato referred to portrayal as “mimesis ... the intention of making an appearance of something that resembles something of a certain kind but is not something of that kind itself” (Hyman, 2006, p. 61). In other words, Plato stated that a portrayal should seek to copy nature. However, Hyman (2006) and Honour and Fleming (2002) maintained that fidelity to nature in portrayal was never satisfactorily explained and that myriad systems and conventions were established in various locations and at different historical periods to denote ‘realistic’ portrayal. For example, starkly different devices for depicting human form, perspective and light and shadow were utilized by artists working in Ancient Greece, Medieval Europe and Renaissance Italy. Despite these differences, and even when imaginary worlds were portrayed, artists did not deviate from employing their specific codes of depiction (Honour & Fleming, 2002; Thuillier, 2002).

Summers (2003) noted that from the 1880s Plato’s conception of portrayal began to be challenged by artists, such as Paul Gauguin and Vincent Van Gough. For example, Van Gough stated in a letter written to his sister in 1890 that “I do not try to do us by photographic resemblance but by our passionate expression using a means of expression and intensification of the character ... and a modern taste of colour” (Jansen, Luijten & Bakker, 2009, p. 254). In other words, rather than accurately rendering what was before his eyes, Van Gough sought to use colour and other visual devices to communicate his feelings (Hyman, 2006). During the first two decades of the twentieth century other artists, such as Pablo Picasso and Wassily Kandinsky, also challenged the idea of art as the imitation of nature and began to experiment with new ways of portraying the world. Depictions also became a way of expressing what the artist knew about the object s/he was portraying (Honour & Fleming, 2002; Thuillier, 2002. In his book, *Concerning the spiritual in art*, the artist Kandinsky (1977) wrote that the requirement that artistic forms ‘conform’ to the rules

of nature has passed and that the artist “may use any form which his expression demands; for his inner impulse must find suitable outward expression” (p. 34).

During the twentieth century artists continued to experiment with concept of portrayal. Jackson Pollock, for example, an American painter who worked during the 1940s and 1950s, portrayed the world by focusing on depicting his internal experiences rather than attempting to recreate on canvas what he ‘saw’. In an interview in 1950 he stated that “the modern artist lives in a mechanical age and we have mechanical means of representing objects” (Jachek, 2011, p.138). Hence, he argued, artists now needed to portray the world “by expressing the energy, the motion and other inner forces” (Jachek, 2011, p. 138).

My study was also guided by the notion that portrayal does not seek to imitate nature or any structure of the external world. Specifically, I did not seek to develop a naturalistic representation of aspects of my migration experience. Instead, I used texture, tone, perspective, colour, scale and other compositional devices to portray this experience.

2.2.2 Experience

The concept of experience has been variously understood by practitioners of different disciplines. It can refer to a completed event, a continuing process that is generated by the subject, something that happens due to an outside force or to the flow of life or a heightened moment of living (Shusterman, 2008).

In this study experience referred to the event of my child migration and included intangible aspects. The importance of including such features of an experience has been noted by Coulter (1989), Dewey, (1980) and Schacter (1996). For example, Dewey (1980) a philosopher, psychologist and educator, noted that imagination and wonder are integral aspects. For Coulter (1989), a sociologist, the concept of experience encompasses more than the sum of all that is encountered in the physical world: it “includes abstract phenomena like music, mathematics, philosophy, physics, pain, emotions and memories” (p. 79). Similarly, through his research into human memory, Schacter (1996) noted that the sensual facets of an experience are as significant as its concrete aspects of an occurrence. In keeping with these views I explored both the internal and external aspects of my migration experience.

2.2.3 Child Migrant

The concept child migrant is seemingly unambiguous. Nevertheless, it has been conceptualized in line with personal and professional interests.

The Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2010) defines a child migrant as someone who comes to live permanently in Australia when they are younger than 24 years of age and who is financially dependant on the their parents. I employed this definition in my study.

Vasta (1993), who researched issues of migration in Australia, developed a social conception of a child migrant. She argued that children who arrive in Australia under the age of three years should be regarded as second generation Australians rather than child migrants as they have been predominately socialized and educated in Australia. As a sociologist her expertise lies in topics such as identity, integration and community, concerns that are evident in her understanding of the concept. I rejected this characterization of child migrants as I viewed it as 'de-legitimizing' their experience for, despite their young age, they may wish to relate to an event that took place in their country of origin.

Psycho-analysts Grinberg and Grinberg (1989), who worked therapeutically with children who had migrated, disputed the legitimacy of the concept of a child migrant. They stated that being a migrant implies a voluntary move and argued, therefore, that it would be more correct to call child migrants "exiles ... because they are not the ones who decide to leave, and they cannot decide to return at will" (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 125). In other words, migration was imposed on children by external forces. Their conceptualization of the child migrant informed my understanding of my own experience as it highlights the powerless position I had occupied at that time. In addition to the concepts of portray, experience and child migrant, my study was undertaken within a particular conceptual understanding of 'art based research'.

2.2.4 The Concepts that framed My Understanding of Art Based Research

My research was built on the notion that portrayal through visual art is a reciprocal process that takes place between artist and viewer. In this study I occupied both positions. The concept that captures this reciprocal positioning is that of aesthetic experience. Both artist

and viewer participate in an aesthetic experience when creating art; through this common experience a communication about the portrayed event takes place.

Croce's (1912/2007) notion of indivisibility also underpinned the study. He argued that the creation and viewing of art constitute a synthesis of the sensuous, the intellectual and the emotional. Thus, he highlighted what he called the "indivisibility" of a work of art (Croce, 1912/2007, p. 20). His notion that the elements constituting a work of art should not be split has been increasingly incorporated into the discourse of contemporary art based research. Artist and researcher Sally Morgan (2001) echoed Croce's (1912/2007) views when she stated that art based research should not "un-art (sic) the art" (p. 15). She reiterated the view that art presented in research should not be seen as the prelude to theory or the site from which information can be extracted, conclusions drawn and meanings made. In keeping with Morgan's (2001) and Croce's (1912/2007) ideas, discussion about the art work in this inquiry did not use art in the service of another discipline, such as psychoanalysis (Schavarién, 1999) or social science (Scott-Hoy, 2000). Rather, the art object always constituted the focus of the discussion.

In keeping with the concept of the indivisibility of art I constructed processes for creating my art, contemplating the images and distilling and examining themes about my experience of child migration. The merit of this topic relates to the historical, seemingly hidden, migration of children to Australia that began with the European settlement of the continent.

2.3 THE VALUE OF STUDYING CHILD MIGRATION

The first convict ships arrived in Australia in 1778 with 34 children on board (Johnston, 1980). Since then children have entered the country as new immigrants along with their families (Crowley, 2001; Jupp, 2007; Vo, 2006). As a consequence, child migrants are always present as students in Australian schools, patients of health services and participants in numerous recreational pursuits (Crowley, 2001). Their education and welfare present both responsibilities and opportunities for the nation (Crowley, 2001; Walker, 2005).

I undertook this study with the belief that an understanding of how children experienced their migration can benefit those who interact with them, specifically in the planning and execution of the services the children access in their daily life. Such understanding has the

potential to facilitate their integration into their host country (Walker, 2005). Doing so can enhance their development and assist them to gain skills to achieve their personal and professional goals. Indeed, their potential to contribute in myriad ways to the well-being and development of the country in which they live will be enhanced. By utilizing a particular form of research this study sought to facilitate further understanding of the experience of these children.

To date information about the experience of child migration has been provided by researchers working in the disciplines of education, psychology and social science and in the memoirs of child migrants. Children have also contributed visual art which refers to their migration.

2.4 EXISTING RESEARCH, LITERATURE AND ART ABOUT CHILD MIGRATION

Within the field of education, research has been undertaken to identify obstacles that may impede the education of child migrants and to provide data about effective educational strategies. Research conducted by Karoly and Gonzalez (2011) revealed that child migrants participated less in extra curricular public school programs than children born in America. Language barriers, bureaucratic complexities and parental distrust of government programs were identified as reasons for the low participation rates. Research which focused on the effectiveness of a particular education approach was undertaken in Canada by Rousseau, Drapeau, Lacroix, Begilishya and Heusch (2005). They examined the question of whether the inclusion of creative programs in schools prevented emotional and behavioural problems in students who were child migrants. They found that children who were exposed to such programs reported higher feelings of confidence and satisfaction in their ability to learn and make friends.

Psychologists have sought to identify ways of maintaining the mental health of child migrants. For example, Barrett, Sonderregger and Xenos (2003) assessed the efficacy of an Australian anxiety prevention and emotional resiliency program. By utilizing standardized measures they concluded that migrant children who completed the program exhibited reduced anxiety symptoms. In another study, Bonowitz (2004), an American psychoanalyst, evaluated some of the variables which affect a migrant child's sense of emotional well-

being. She concluded that the parents' ability to provide a secure environment determined whether their child's mental health would be enriched or impoverished by migration.

Social scientists offer another perspective on child migration. Their studies have investigated the ways in which child migrants operate within their communities (Heissler, 2010; Laoire, Carpena-Mendez, Tyrrell and White, 2010; Yaqub, 2007). Yaqub's (2007) British study, for example, sought to identify if the age at migration affected the socio-economic level reached by adult child migrants. Yaqub (2007) concluded that younger child migrants were more likely to attain higher levels of economic and social success. These studies produced summative evaluations through the use of various research methods, including standard psychological questionnaires, interview protocols and statistical formulas. However, I believe that these research techniques have the effect of fragmenting the child's experience of migration and, therefore, do not provide a comprehensive sense of the child's experience as a consequence of their migration. Phenomenological researcher van Manen (1997) agreed that such splitting of an experience tends "to pulverize life into minute abstracted fragments and particles that are of little use to the practitioner" (p. 7).

A somewhat different research approach was utilized in an Australian study about British child migrants (Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee, 2001). The Australian Senate Community Affairs paper, *Lost Innocents – righting the record* (2001), included fragments of the life stories of English child migrants who came to Australia from the 1930s to the 1960s without their families. Interviews with them as adults documented the emotional and physical abuse they had encountered while in institutional care within Australia. Similarly, Igoa (1995), an American teacher, explored 'her' migrant students' experience of school through interviews and photographs of images they drew in class. These inquiries differed from the previous research studies I have identified because they included testimonies of child migrants. But, while the inclusion of the children's 'voice' offers a palpable sense of what they felt and thought, the research addresses specific areas of the experience, namely school life and institutional abuse, and so denies the possibility of engaging in a comprehensive or holistic investigation. Such insight is, I believe, presented in the memoirs of adult child migrants.

These memoirs constitute a separate, if limited, genre of literature about the experience of child migration and comprise a separate category of recollections from those written by children of migrants such as Gaita, (1999) and Pung (2008) and Tan (2006). The memoirs of child migrants include books and short stories written by Hoffman (1998, 1999), Inglis (1983), Lagnado (2007), Lee (1994), Riemer (1992), Ulman (2007) and Witcomb (2007). Unlike professional and academic literature on child migration, these narrations provide comprehensive subjective descriptions of the experience. They include aspects of the parents', siblings' and friends' lives (Inglis, 1983; Lagnado, 2007; Riemer, 1992; Witcomb, 2007), descriptions of their lives as adults (Inglis, 1983; Lagnado, 2007; Riemer, 1992) and, in some, details of specific 'all consuming' aspects of their lives (Hoffman, 1998, 1999; Lee, 1994; Ulman, 2007).

Apart from the small artist books that I had produced prior to commencing the study, I was unable to locate examples of art created by child migrants that depicted their experience directly. Contemporary artists, such as the American painter David Harouni and the Australian sculptor Patricia Piccinini, who were both child migrants, have written about how their childhood migration affects the techniques they employ (Harouni, 2006) and their choice of subject matter (Piccinini, 2006). Another child migrant, Domenico de Clario, a Melbourne artist, approaches the topic of his childhood migration in a slightly different manner. In his 2007 exhibition, 'That Time', he explored his parents' and sister's experiences of migration. In the exhibition catalogue he wrote that he sought to discover what "he missed, what transformed their [his parents'] lives and has perhaps failed to touch me" (de Clario, 2007, p. 1). While this comment alludes to some sense of absence or disengagement, de Clario, like other child migrant artists, does not present any direct visual representations of his own experience.

In summary, literature written by and for people who work in a professional capacity with child migrants has focused on ways of identifying problems and of promoting their psychological health, education and integration. Other literature presents particular aspects of the subjective experience of child migration while art created by child migrants does not directly portray the artist's experience of their migration. Thus, I did not find a multi-faceted, visual portrayal of the experience of child migration. My inquiry endeavoured to fill

this knowledge gap by presenting an holistic, subjective account of the experience using visual art as data.

2.5 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was four fold: first, to gain insight into my experience of being a child migrant so that I could understand my experience from my perspective, rather than from my parents'. In this way I felt that I would be able to take 'ownership' of this experience.

My second aim was to generate material that could stimulate discussion and debate among professionals and policy makers about the focus, depth and breadth of how the subject of child migration is addressed.

Third, I hoped that the use of art as data could serve as a model for researching other aspects of life. In particular, the study could exemplify a way of exploring experiences which have been 'overlooked' or ignored by the research community because these are seen to be, in some way, 'wordless'. For example, researchers Jipson and Paley (1997) have identified wonder and awe as such experiences. In a private discussion during 2012, George Halasz (G. Halasz, personal communication, February 2, 2012), a Melbourne psychiatrist, noted that aspects of trauma and grief were experiences that cannot be described adequately through words.

Finally, by demonstrating a particular way of creating and exploring visual data I hoped that aspects of the research practice could be utilized by professionals working with child migrants. Through my study I sought to communicate the subjective and emotional aspects of the experience by using visual art, seeking to engage the viewer in a sensory, as well as a cognitive encounter.

2.6 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The subjective nature of my investigation and the inherent qualities of visual art allowed me to achieve the four objectives of my study and so provide a new perspective on child migration. However, whether its process is adopted by professionals who work with child migrants is the subject of another study.

2.6.1 The Significance of Subjectivity

Explicit subjectivity and emotionality in research practice have been increasingly accepted and appreciated, particularly within contemporary social science and art based research (Barone, 2001; Behar, 1996; Ellis & Bochner, 2002; McNiff, 2008; Richardson, 2000; Sparkes, 2002). These qualities have been incorporated with the understanding that “experience cannot be captured fully: ... [and] can only be interpreted from limited, partial perspectives” (Ellis, 2009, p. 15). She, therefore, argued for the adoption of this stance on the basis of gaining in-depth understanding as a pre-requisite to social change, maintaining that research,

should aim to help us understand a large communal, relational world of which we are part of and that moves us to critical engagement, social action and social change [with] an emphasis on self understanding, examining lives one at a time... [as a] way of changing the world. (Ellis, 2009, p. 229)

This approach relates to my study as it underscores one of its aims, that of provoking thoughtful discussion. Rather than expecting my subjective portrayal to be accepted as a definitive account of child migration, the depictions are presented as a way of stimulating empathy for child migrants, discussion and questioning of their experience. As well, the utilization of art as data has the potential to present the experience in a unique way.

2.6.2 The Significance of Visual Art in the Study

The understandings that can emerge through an exploration of visual art cannot be replicated through an investigation of written material about an experience. Eisner (2002) pointed out that while language is a central and primary form of communication, it is by no means the only mode that we can, and do, employ. He added that what we see also constructs our capacity for communication because seeing is not a passive process by which impressions enter our mind. Rather, he argued, seeing is itself the beginning of a process by which we begin to formulate our understanding of the world. In this way, Eisner alluded to an important aspect of my study: that viewing my art could awaken me to aspects of my migration which I could not have apprehended prior to my creation of my imagery.

Another significant feature of employing art in research is its capacity to portray various facets of an experience simultaneously. The compression of complex thoughts into a single

image is a well acknowledged feature of visual art (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Reimer, 1989; Sava & Nuutinen, 2003). In other words, multiple ideas and thoughts can be contained within the nominal image and also in the colours, textures materials and proportions chosen by the artist. According to Eisner (2002), this visual richness has the potential to awaken the viewer's cognition and imagination in a number of simultaneous ways and subvert the tendency to settle too quickly on a fixed interpretation or theory about the portrayed event. The range of possible ideas that can be considered thus extends beyond the capacity of the linear progression of written text (Eisner, 2002).

Furthermore, creating images about an event or person allows aspects of life that are inchoate and ineffable to be portrayed. Van Manen (1997) explained that some experiences fall into these categories because "Words miss the fullness and uniqueness of private worlds. Words fall short because language is essentially social and so the essentially unique private qualities of inner experience will ultimately be beyond our linguistic reach" (p. xiii). Visual images can, therefore, allow some ideas that could not otherwise be expressed to become visible. Artistic depictions also stabilize ideas and thoughts that might be fleeting. By fixing ideas and visions that are in some way ephemeral we have an opportunity to begin a conversation with the image and find a way to bring the previously unrecorded ideas and thoughts into the world (Eisner, 2002; Sava & Nuutinen, 2003). Again, this aspect of visual imagery relates to the concept of aesthetic experience that guided my study and underscores my understanding of the reciprocal nature of creating art. The ability to view thoughts that, normally, I could not hold in my mind enriched my understanding of the experience I portrayed.

As well, visual art allows experience to be embodied through the materials used in its creation. Materials have the potential to sensitize us to aspects of the world that we may otherwise overlook; for example, art that is created with hard materials may highlight our appreciation of any harshness or inflexibility that might be depicted. Most importantly, the facets of visual art described in the preceding paragraphs engage both the mind and body and so have the potential to facilitate a portrayal with what Reason (1998) called the "liveliness, the involvement and even the passion of the experience" (p. 79). In my study the sensory nature of the art work engaged my senses of touch, smell, sight and hearing and

evoked emotions that are closely tied to experiencing these sensations. Thus, my apprehension of my portrayal went beyond an intellectual process.

2.7 THE STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This study is contained in two volumes. Volume One comprises the written component. It consists of eight chapters. In Chapter One I discuss my reasons for undertaking the study; in Chapter Two I introduce the research question, the purpose and significance of the study and provide an outline of its structure. In Chapter Three I detail the context of the experience I portrayed; in Chapter Four I present the conceptual foundations of the inquiry and in Chapter Five I examine the research practices I utilized. In Chapters Six and Seven I discuss the four themes that I identified. I discuss the findings, implications and recommendations of my study in Chapter Eight.

The second volume comprises facsimiles of my art work which portray my migration experience. The work is presented according to themes which emerged as a result of my contemplation of the images. They are 'The pervasive power of language', 'An unknown self', 'A void' and 'The loss of home'.

In the following chapter I outline the context of my childhood migration experience. I hope that by providing this background material my art and the themes I identified will be considered through the prism of my life, not as a generic, disembodied portrayal of child migration.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTEXTUALIZING MY STUDY: FROM ISRAEL TO MELBOURNE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I contextualize my study within the parameters of time and location. In doing so, I provide an overview of some aspects of life in Israel and Australia that prevailed around the time of my migration. This material is offered with the understanding that “history is [viewed as] a contested discourse, an embattled terrain wherein people, classes and groups autobiographically construct interpretations of the past” (Jenkins, 2004, p. 19). Hence, it is a product of my understanding of my past, not a ‘truthful’ account of conditions and events that took place during those years. Lynch (2005) elaborated on the notion of truth when he stated that “human thought is situated in context, and it is context that shapes our thinking” (p. 36). He concluded that “no God’s-eye point of view exists” (Lynch, 2005, p. 36). In other words, no objective and definitive version of past events can exist. Thus, the partial historically and culturally constructed interpretation of history which follows may lead the reader to ask useful, relevant, and enlightening questions about the events recounted and so not passively accept ‘facts’ (Richardson, 2000).

My account does not constitute a record of myriad aspects of life in Israel and Melbourne. Rather, I describe facets of life which feature, explicitly or implicitly, in the images contained in Volume Two of the study. The material should, thus, be viewed as ultimately interpretive and so, inevitably, I foreground some events whilst minimizing others.

3.2 THE NEWLY FOUNDED STATE OF ISRAEL

Until my migration I lived in a country which had been declared an independent state for only four years. The conditions which I outline in this chapter were, in my view, ultimately connected to the ‘newness’ of this state.

The circumstances that led to the declaration of the State of Israel were established politically in 1947. A decision was made by the British parliament that it was in Britain’s best

interest to give up its 31 year mandate over Palestine (Blech, 1994). In response, the United Nations (UN) was empowered to settle problems between Arab and Jewish claims over the land (Blech, 1994; Cohen, 1986; Gilbert, 1978). On 29 November, 1947, the UN passed Resolution 181 that called for the creation of Jewish and Arab states on the land vacated by the British. The Resolution passed with 25 nations in favour, 12 against and 17 abstentions (Cohen, 1986; Eisenstadt, 1985). On the 5 May, 1948, the State of Israel was declared by Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, with the words: "We hereby proclaim the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine, to be called Medinat Israel [the State of Israel]" (Blech, 1994, p. 275).

The desire for a Jewish state had been re-invigorated with the rise of world-wide nationalist movements in the nineteenth century. At that time the word Zion was re-constituted as Zionism which came to denote a nationalist, political movement which sought to reinstate the Jewish people to the land of Israel (Kressel, 1973). While many Jews were actively involved in the Zionist movement at this time, others were not and, indeed, many were violently opposed to the idea of a Jewish state. Nevertheless, a pattern of significant growth in the immigration of Jewish people to Palestine ensued during the late nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, immigration increased after the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 (Drory, 2005; Gilbert, 2008; Louvish, 1973).

In 1948 the Jewish population of the State of Israel was between 600,000 and 700,000 (Eisenstadt, 1985; Matras, 1970). This figure included my father who migrated from Poland to Israel during the 1920s, and my mother who came to Israel from Latvia in the 1930s. With the establishment of the state the drive to increase the population took on an additional urgency as an enlarged Jewish population was seen to be vitally important for reasons of security and economic development (Drory, 2005; Eisenstadt 1985; Gilbert, 1978; Matras 1970). Living and remaining in Israel became deeply valued actions. The number of immigrants entering Israel in the 1950s rose dramatically as Jewish refugees from Europe and the Middle East arrived, eager to create a fresh start in life. Their arrival was widely celebrated.

3.3 THE CHALLENGES OF LIVING IN A NEWLY FOUNDED STATE

As a new state Israel had to move quickly to develop the infrastructures needed to provide the services and consumer goods for a burgeoning population. However, the fledgling institutions and manufacturing enterprises were inadequately equipped to do so (Aronoff, 2000). As a consequence, food and many basic household items were in short supply; an uncompromising system of rationing was implemented and continued until 1951 (Sachar, 1996). Many shortages continued to be experienced well into the 1950s. But, by 1960, the year I left Israel, the circumstances of life “while still unquestionably drab, were no longer grim” (Sachar, 1996, p. 427).

3.3.1 Scarcity of Household Goods

Despite the improved economic outlook of Israel my everyday life continued to be austere. Our home was very sparsely furnished and the fittings in every part of the house were very elementary. Whilst basic foods, such as bread, milk and vegetables, were plentiful, some foods, such as red meat, were considered unaffordable extravagances. Eggplant remained a staple substitute for meat in our home. Books, toys and many items of clothing were also seen as luxury items and rarely bought. An acute shortage of housing also became apparent with the dramatic population increase after the establishment of the state (Gilbert, 1978).

3.3.2 Shortages in Housing

As all housing options were taken up, temporary housing in the form of temporary huts were set up by the government. These began to mushroom alongside more established towns and villages and were called *ma'abarot* (Sachar, 1996). As my parents were not new immigrants to the state they did not need to be housed in the *ma'abarot* and were able to secure privately sourced housing.

The home we lived in was, nevertheless, very modest. It consisted of two inter-connecting rooms each of which served as a bedroom and living area. It was built and designed in the boxy functional Bauhaus-inspired style favoured during the 1950s and adapted for the hot Middle Eastern climate and the limited resources available at time (Matzner-Samok, 1994). Around our street, which consisted of these small and unadorned rectangular homes, makeshift *ma'abarot* were constructed by the government. These hastily built homes

transformed our neighbourhood into one in which the utilities that serviced our life became severely strained. One such utility through which I experienced this strain was my education.

3.3.3 Overcrowding in Schools

Schools throughout Israel became overcrowded during the early 1950s as large numbers of immigrant children entering the school system. The government-run schools were hastily built as new neighbourhoods sprang up across the country (Eisenstadt, 1985). The school I attended between 1957 and 1960 was one of these swiftly constructed new schools. Class sizes were very large and my second grade class numbered 38 students. At some point the school became so overcrowded that each grade level, including mine, was held twice a day, with some students attending school in the morning and others attending in the afternoon. Consequently, the hours of school attendance were cut. Nevertheless, despite the overcrowding and the re- structuring of the school days, the value of education was widely acknowledged as a way of creating national unity (Eisenstadt, 1967).

3.4 A SPECIFIC EDUCATION IN THE NEW STATE OF ISRAEL

In the newly established State of Israel a policy of free compulsory schooling until the age of 14 years was instituted on 22 June, 1949 (Mishal, 1998). The importance of bringing children from diverse ethnic backgrounds into a state educational system was fundamental to the government's policy of *mamlachtiyut*, a term which described an emphasis on the centrality of nationhood (Dowty, 1995). It was anticipated that schools would transmit an homogenous social and cultural heritage that would unify the different immigrant groups (Don-Yehiya, 1995; Eisenstadt, 1985; Gilbert, 1998).

One of the strategies employed to achieve this objective was the re-establishment, after 1,800 years, of Hebrew as a spoken language. In 1889 a Russian Jew, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, led a movement to revive the Hebrew language (Cohen, 2005; Gilbert, 1978). His aim was to convert Hebrew from a language of liturgy to a practical language that could be used to communicate the events of contemporary daily life (Cohen, 2005; Gilbert, 1978).

Themes of nature and agriculture were commonly included in school texts as they were seen to embody national regeneration (Abramson, 1995; Manor-Friedman 2003). In

addition, teachers made use of historical periods “that could be interpreted as asserting the value of political activism and political sovereignty while other aspects associated with Jewish Diaspora life were ignored” (Don-Yehiya, 1995, p. 181). This selectivity denied the significance of any traditional culture that originated during the period of Jewish exile, specifically, the Jewish Diaspora languages of Yiddish and Ladino, and centuries of literature, music and religious writing. Their omission communicated the government’s indifference to those periods of Jewish history (Leibman & Don-Yehiya, 1985). Even the devastation of the Holocaust was not included in the Israeli school curriculum until after my emigration in 1960 (Leibman & Don-Yehiya, 1985).

My education in this curriculum meant that when I arrived in Australia I was ignorant of many important aspects of the Jewish Diaspora life. In particular, I knew very little about the Holocaust which had been experienced by a large proportion of the Jewish community in Melbourne. This was also a community which was immersed in European Jewish traditions and culture rather than the struggles for nationhood which had been stressed in my previous education. The ongoing military threat, was also an issue which had permeated my existence in Israel was also absent.

3.5 LIVING WITH THE THREAT OF WAR

Hostility existed between Israel and its Arab neighbours from the day the declaration of independence was pronounced (Gilbert, 1978). Consequently, I lived under the threat of armed conflict. In 1956, when I was four years old, war broke out; my father was recruited by the army and fought in what was called the Sinai Campaign. My memories of that war are scant but the sight of my father on his return from the war front in army uniform, totally covered in dust, remains vivid.

Despite the brief appreciation of togetherness engendered in our family and community by the threat to our physical security, the defence of borders and the war led to separations and traumas that were experienced by the entire population. The sense of a continuous, external, existential threat, as well as the presence of the military in daily life, were part of my family’s experience and, therefore, of mine, and sometimes led to severe disruptions of our usual pattern of family life. These disruptions were due to worries regarding my father’s physical safety and to our economic situation. My father, who was self-employed, was

unable to generate an income when he was away at war or on army reserve duty. Thus, I grew up with a sense of looming, ever present, danger and the stresses that this engendered in me.

3.6 ANTAGONISM AMONG ISRAELIS TOWARDS EMIGRANTS

Between 1958 and 1960, the time of my family's emigration, 37,000 residents left Israel (Matras, 1970). Emigration from Israel was viewed with disapproval by most sections of Israeli society (Shokeid, 1998). The word coined during the 1950s for the act of emigration was *yeridah* or 'going down', a pejorative term that conferred attributes of cowardliness and lack of resolve on those who left the country (Shokeid, 1998). Beyond these attacks on emigrants' character, *yordim* (emigrants) were also disparaged in quasi theological terms "either as fallen angels or, at worst, the handmaidens of Satan" (Sobel, 1986, p. 15).

This hostile reaction to emigration was connected not only to economic and security concerns. In addition, emigration was seen as an abandonment of 'home' and 'family' (Sobel, 1998). Thus, my family's decision to emigrate would have been viewed negatively, not with equanimity. I believe that, somehow, I absorbed these negative attitudes as I connect my memory of our imminent departure with feelings of embarrassment and even shame. More specifically, these feelings may have resulted from an episode in which I witnessed my school teacher's scathing response to a fellow student who announced in school that she was moving to live in North America. As far as I can recall I did not disclose my family's plans to anyone at school and, whilst my mother may have informed the school of my departure, it was never spoken about in class.

The reasons for my parents' decision to emigrate were never conveyed to me at the time. However, in retrospect, some of the challenges that faced the new state may have contributed to their decision.

3.7 PRELUDE TO LEAVING ISRAEL

My father left for Australia in June, 1960, and my sister, mother and I joined him six months later. In the months between our re-union in Melbourne my mother had to finalize our departure. Amongst the tasks that needed to be undertaken was the sale of our house and the packing and shipping of the belongings that we wanted to take with us. Most of my

books and clothes and almost all of our furniture were sold or given away without ceremony. In the weeks prior to our departure we left our house and moved in with my grandfather and aunty who lived in Tel Aviv, some distance from our home. Thus, I spent my last weeks in solitude, no longer attending school and far from my normal environment.

We left Israel by aeroplane very early one morning from Israel's main airport located in Lod. The journey to Melbourne took a week as we travelled via Teheran and Singapore, spending a day or two at each destination. Our first landing in Australia was in Darwin after which we flew to Sydney before finally arriving at Essendon airport, Melbourne, on 23rd December 1960, on a grey, overcast summer day.

3.8 LIFE IN MELBOURNE PRIOR TO OUR ARRIVAL

The lives of Melbournians in the 1950s were overshadowed by the events of World War Two as well as the depression of the 1930s (Britain, 1997). After the tumultuous war years most people focused on their desire to build secure, comfortable, lives that did not replicate the privations and uncertainties of the previous two decades.

Australia, having been on the 'winning side' of the World War Two, entered a period of political stability and increasing prosperity. In this atmosphere residents sensed that opportunities for the future were plentiful and that 'everything' could be realized through hard work (Townsend, 1998). Australians were generally seen to live their lives around the concepts of freedom and the family (Grimshaw, Lake, McGrath & Quartly, 1994). Couples who had deferred marriage now married, they were keen to establish families and to settle down to a 'normal' everyday existence (Townsend, 1998). However, the stable prosperity that Australians craved was both stimulated and challenged by the enormous rise in immigration that took place in the 1950s and 1960s.

During those decades "both the Labor and Liberal governments concurred in the necessity for large scale immigration" (Grimshaw, Lake, McGrath & Quartly, 1994, p. 272). Both parties preferred British immigrants. The acceptance, and acceptability, of migrants in the 1950s and 60s depended a great deal on their ability and desire to assimilate by learning English and living 'an Australian' way of life. The White Australia Policy which began at Federation in 1901, and was not entirely removed until 1973, was still in place. This policy

sought to restrict the immigration of non-Europeans (Grimshaw, Lake, McGrath & Quartly, 1994).

Nevertheless, following an agreement with the international Refugee Organization, Australia began to accept thousands of displaced persons (Grimshaw, Lake, McGrath & Quartly, 1994). Between 1947 and 1966 there was a massive increase in the population of Melbourne, with the majority of immigrants coming from Italy and Greece and smaller numbers from Malta, Holland and Germany (Sherington, 1980).

Migrants began to make an impact on the character of Melbourne, with some changes to the Anglo character of the city being greeted with suspicion (Sherington, 1980). For example, in the 1950s Pellegrini's, an Italian café, opened in Bourke Street in the central business district of Melbourne, and introduced espresso and European café style eating to the public. The concept of the espresso bar caught on, but not without official suspicion. *The Sun* newspaper, December 1960, quotes a speech by Arthur Rylah, Deputy Premier of Victoria: "Girls of 13 and 14 [are] being procured for immoral purposes in some espresso bars ... Many of the espresso bars are breeding ground for crimes ... And some places were adding drugs to coffee" (*"Girls led to vice"*, 1960).

Despite the suspicions raised about some of the customs of new migrants, their large numbers stimulated the economy, evident in the building of new homes. Following World War Two a government backed building program was introduced and suburbs began to expand: "In Melbourne between 1945 and 1960 nearly 178,000 houses were built. These homes were mainly built for owner occupiers, and mostly built in a ring of low density suburbs up to 20 kilometres from the city centre" (Dingle & O'Hanlon, 1997, p. 33).

Life in Melbourne was, thus, in a state of flux, both physically and culturally, at the time of my family's arrival in Melbourne. We lived amidst these developments.

3.9 THE START OF A NEW STAGE OF LIFE

My father and uncle were waiting for us at Essendon airport. My uncle drove us to the flat my father had rented for us. It was on the ground floor located in a large building which faced St Kilda Road, a wide, leafy boulevard leading into the central business district of Melbourne.

The block of flats consisted of three floors and had a number of exterior art deco features, such as faceted forms of decoration around its entrances and rounded corners on the upper storey verandas. It represented a stark contrast to the rectangular unadorned building which had been my home in Israel. When I entered the flat for the first time my interest centred around a black telephone which sat on a little ledge in the hallway. Although the telephone was not connected I was overwhelmed by the idea that we were in possession of such an instrument which, until then, I had rarely seen in a private home. Its presence signified to me that Australia was a place of untold possible luxury. The reality of our life in Melbourne, however, proved to be somewhat different.

3.10 OUR POSITION IN AUSTRALIA AS JEWISH ISRAELI MIGRANTS

We arrived in Australia soon after a large number of Jewish refugees had entered Australia. Between 1925 and 1954 some 25,000 non-British Jews, mainly from Central and Eastern Europe, settled in Australia. However, the Israeli population within the growing Jewish population was miniscule and “between 1948 and 1967 only about 2,000 Israeli Jews immigrated to Australia” (Rubinstein, 1987, p. 219). While post-Holocaust Jewish refugees faced some prejudice from the mostly British resident Jewish population, Israeli immigrant faced much greater ambivalence from the Jews of Melbourne as most held the view that leaving the State of Israel was regrettable (Rubinstein, 1991). Thus, our family left Israel under a cloud, only to find ourselves judged again by our new local Jewish community.

Unlike the European refugees my parents received no official community welcome or assistance. They relied on a handful of family acquaintances to help them to become established both in the general Australian community and within the local life of Jewish Melbourne. For the first months of my life in Melbourne we struggled to find places to shop, a school to attend and doctors and dentists to take care of our medical needs. In addition, the economic situation in Melbourne was far from robust.

3.11 ESTABLISHING A NEW LIFE IN MELBOURNE

As noted earlier, my parents’ efforts to establish themselves in Melbourne were undertaken as life in Australia began to improve after the austerity of the war years. However, despite a general improvement in living standards the year we arrived in Australia was economically

difficult. Unemployment in the country was two percent which, at the time, was considered extreme. Sudden and harsh credit restrictions and a fall in import earnings caused a 'credit squeeze' which then led to a severe recession in 1960 to 1961 (Crowley, 1973). This economic outlook meant that at the very time that my father was looking to establish himself in the workforce, opportunities for business ventures and employment were scarce. Thus, the economic hardships which we had endured in Israel prevailed in our initial post-migration years.

I became aware for the first time of our relative poverty. When we left Israel a wealthy class was not yet established so we had no comparative basis and had not seen ourselves as 'lacking'. But when we bought a television in Australia and I began to watch shows, such as *Love Lucy*, *Hawaiian Eye* and *The Donna Reed Show* (T.V. guide, 1960). I became aware of luxuries I had never imagined. My sense that others were living a more glamorous life was particularly pronounced in the first months of our arrival as I did not have the opportunity to experience the reality of Australian life until I was enrolled at the local public primary school in February, 1961.

3.12 LEARNING TO BE AN AUSTRALIAN

The school I attended had a large migrant population, including children from Holland, Greece, Italy and Norway. However, I was the only Israeli migrant. As in Israel, education was compulsory and free and, similarly, during the 1960s schools struggled to accommodate a large number of new immigrants (Miller & Davey, 1988).

Migrant children from non-English speaking backgrounds were encouraged to learn the English language as quickly as they could. As a primary school headmaster wrote in 1951: "The child must learn to think in English from the start ... English must be spoken to the pupils all day, every day, in every activity, in school and out of it" (Sherington, 1980, p. 157). At the primary school which I attended special classes in English were organized once a day for all migrant students. At no time during lesson time was any mention made of, or interest ever expressed by any of my teachers in, the place of birth, language or culture of any of the migrant children who attended these special classes. I felt very strongly that my major task was to conform to the norms of the school as quickly as I could.

3.13 SUMMARY

In this chapter I introduced the background of my life in Israel and Australia and outlined the changes that confronted me when I moved to Melbourne. Differences that I encountered included transformations in my physical, social and educational environments. Whilst the details of these aspects of my migration were not always explicitly portrayed in my art, an understanding of what transpired during the time of my migration will, hopefully, enrich viewers' appreciation of the images presented in the study.

The next chapters provide an exploration of how my art was created and explored. I begin with an examination of the concepts that underpinned this feature of my study.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION OF MY ART PROCESS: AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE AND THE INDIVISIBILITY OF ART

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The study set out to answer the question, ‘What do my art works portray about my experience of being a child migrant?’ Two concepts informed the methodology I employed to explore the research question: aesthetic experience and the indivisibility of art. Aesthetic experience denotes a reciprocal process that takes place between artist and viewer. The concept of the indivisibility of art refers to the idea that when an image is considered as an holistic entity, communication between the artist and viewer is most effective. This concept informed the way I contemplated and explored my art work.

In the next section I explore how I came to understand the applicability of these concepts to my study. The discussion is followed by an assessment of their relevance to the aims of the study.

4.2 MY ADOPTION OF A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

I became aware of the concepts of aesthetic experience and the indivisibility of an art work during a visit to an art exhibition held at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University’s (RMIT) Storey Hall Gallery in Melbourne, 2007, a short time before I began this research. At that time the gallery was exhibiting works by the Australian artist Jenny Watson, in a show titled “Material Evidence”, which had originally been exhibited in Brisbane in 2005. The images depicted scenes from her early life, and I found them immediately compelling. An image I spent a long time viewing was titled “Object of Desire - 60s guitarist”. It consisted of a stylized depiction of a young woman drawn on a sparkly pink fabric. Superimposed on her chest was a drawing of a young man holding a guitar. My first reaction as a viewer was that of pleasure as I took in the colours, the texture of the fabric, and my perception of the whimsical naivety of the image.

Consciously using my memories of my adolescence, I began to consider that the image might be portraying the awakening of sexual desire in the girl. As well, I began to dwell on the tenderness and fragility of the girl's budding womanhood. While I continued to engage with the image other thoughts began to emerge. I found myself taking special notice of the sparkly fabric that formed the background. I remembered a pink sequined dress that I was given as a 14 year old in which I had felt so grown up. This memory led me to recall how the design of the dress had inhibited my movements and how uncomfortable I had felt when I wore it. I wondered if the young man drawn on the girl's chest somehow represented the physical freedom of young men that is lost to some girls as they grow up.

After some thought, I came to understand that my experience in the gallery consisted of an exchange between myself as both viewer and artist. Furthermore, whilst I was not able to ascertain the artist's motives and experiences as she created her art, I intuited that we engaged in an aesthetic experience. I also understood that the aesthetic experience I underwent possessed distinctive qualities that do not apply to other domains, such as music or drama. Following the ideas of Reimer (1989), the particular nature of my aesthetic experience was unique because each form of the arts occupies "distinctive modes of thought peculiar to the cognitive sub-realm it embodies" (p. 85). Hence the essential characteristics of my aesthetic experience were specific to my creation and viewing of visual art.

Finally, I came to understand that the breadth of ideas which each image incited in me came through my aesthetic engagement with it as a whole. It was not produced by dividing the portrayal into categories, such as collage and portraiture, or by considering elements of the image in terms of another discipline, such as social history or psychology. These insights guided the development of my inquiry.

In the next section I outline how my engagement through aesthetic experience and apprehension of the entirety of an image shaped the way I created my art work, and how I subsequently viewed it.

4.3 AN ARTIST'S ATTITUDE TO CREATING IMAGERY

My understanding of the aesthetic experience, initially formed through viewing Watson's art, was reinforced as I began to create art work for the study and explore relevant literature. I concluded that two components of this experience comprised the 'mechanism' through which I could portray my experience of being a child migrant. These components and their role in the way I set about creating my imagery follows. I begin with a discussion of how the term aesthetic experience was understood in the study.

4.3.1 My Understanding of an Aesthetic Experience

The term aesthetic experience is often used when art is discussed. However, it is seldom defined. Shusterman (2008) and Tomlin (2008), amongst others, have noted that defining this term is fraught with difficulties, its meaning being "very vague, variable and contested because each word of the term can be understood in multiple ways" (Shusterman, 2008, p. 79). Aesthetic can refer to distinctive objects of perception, such as art works, and to a singular mode of consciousness that grasps objects, such as works of art. Similarly, experience can be understood in multiple ways. It can refer to a completed event, a continuing process that is generated by the subject, something that happens due to an external force, or to the flow of life or a heightened moment of living (Shusterman, 2008).

One definition which I found useful was Hagman's (2005), a psychoanalyst. She characterized aesthetic experience as "an emergent phenomenon that arises in the transitional psychological zone in which our creative engagement with the world exists" (Hagman, 2005, p. 1). In other words, the experience is understood to be an individual's inventive way of confronting the world. I found this definition was useful as it embraced the idea of an ongoing interaction between an individual and the world. I worked with this conception and expanded it to incorporate the process of creating art.

Through a synthesis of ideas expressed by Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990), Greene (2001) and Tomlin (2008), I arrived at my own conception of aesthetic experience. I defined it as an encounter in which an artist perceives his or her environment with a heightened perception, and then manipulates media and content in a bid to produce vivid experiences in the audience. The experience for an artist is, therefore, understood to refer

to that person's unconscious or conscious internal encounter with some aspect of the world, which is then expressed in images that seek to arouse the viewer in some way. For the viewer, the aesthetic experience is similarly seen as an encounter with an image to which they are drawn through their experience of the world, and which provides them with a "type of consciousness that no other mode of experience can provide" (Tomlin, 2008, p. 7).

In addition, the quality of the artist's aesthetic experience was not conceptualized in the study as a singular happening, such as the sensation of sugar on the tongue. Rather, as Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990) noted, an aesthetic experience for an artist and viewer is comprised of a number of qualitative dimensions: intellectual, perceptual, emotional and communicative. Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990), Greene (2001), Crowther (2008) and Tomlin (2008) have variously synthesized these dimensions. Through their discussions I came to adopt the view that the aesthetic experience comprises two essential elements: an imaginative approach and the experience of a pleasurable encounter.

In the next two sub-sections I analyse these components as they applied to my role as an artist and how they shaped my portrayal of my childhood migration experience. I begin with a discussion of the imaginative approach.

4.3.2 An Artist's Imaginative Approach

As an element of an aesthetic experience an artist's imaginative approach opens the way for the portrayal of complex layers of an experience. Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1990), Greene (2001) and Tomlin (2008) identified the possession of an imaginative approach by an artist as a core component of the aesthetic experience. In my study I sought to understand what constituted an imaginative approach. In particular, I understood that the imaginative approach encompassed that which exists in the viewer's perception rather than in a shared reality (Tomlin, 2008).

A fundamental notion about art created with an imaginative frame of mind is that the depicted life events are transformed. In this way the portrayals are prevented from being trapped in "in literalism [and] blind factuality" (Greene, 2001, p. 65) or as depictions that are a visual enactment of an event or experience. Thus, creating art imaginatively can move an

artistic creation beyond what Rodari (1996) termed “hierarchies of field” (p. ix), in which literal events take precedence over other ways of perceiving them. Instead, art can be produced in an alternate “field of reality” (Rodari, 1996, p. ix), in which experiences can be encountered equally from all points of view, including fantasy and sensory impression. Therefore, in creating art for the study I sought to create art with an imaginative approach so that I could portray a multi-faceted overview of my migration.

In the following two sub-sections I discuss the ways in which my adoption of an imaginative approach changed the scope of my art work.

4.3.2.1 Gaining new insights through an imaginative approach

By loosening the hold of literalism and valuing the more ephemeral aspects of an experience when creating art, Dewey (1980) argued that the artist could weld together elements in new, but authentic, ways. Doing so could allow previously hidden aspects of an experience to be ‘presented’ in an image (Dewey, 1980). Greene (2001) added to this notion, maintaining that these inclusions enabled the artist to reach beyond what they already “know” (p. 74). Hence, the ‘letting go’ of literalism can disclose ideas that may have been closed to the artist or which had been inaccessible for some reason. Perhaps they were not accessible through linear thought processes and so their revelation could surprise both the artist and the viewer (Rodari, 1996). Indeed, through my use of imagery that was not ‘real’ or factually based, I became aware of nuances of feeling that I had about certain past incidents. For example, I found that through the depictions of elements from my dream world I was able to become aware of subtle gradations in the emotions I experienced at the time of my migration.

As well, the prevalence of an imaginative attitude in creating art may increase the artist’s ability to present different attitudes about an experience through the creation of “as if perspectives” (Greene, 2001, p. 65). When the event is confronted by the artist in this way, the parameters of what is portrayed opens considerably. An illusionary outlook allows for the creation of an image which does not need to make ‘sense’ because it is not tied to facts. Instead, the event or experience can be presented metaphorically (Csikszenthalyi & Robinson, 1990).

As I created art for the study, my adoption of an “as if” (Greene, 2001, p. 65) attitude allowed me to view some aspects of my experience through metaphor. Thus, I could depict myself as a floating house and symbolically communicate both a desire for a safe place and a sense of not being attached to the world. Through these new perspectives an opportunity for the emergence of fresh understandings emerged. The creation of metaphoric images also related to the way an imaginative approach can break down timeworn understandings.

4.3.2.2 Gaining unexpected understandings through an imaginative approach

Depicting an incident imaginatively can move the creator of art beyond ossified attitudes in which the artist remains trapped in the “cottonwool of habit” (Greene, 2001, p. 65). When this frozen state exists an artist can find it hard to challenge their understanding of an event. The French artist, Christian Boltanski (1996), explained that he used unexpected images and materials in his work as these prevented him from becoming complacent about his grasp of an event or experience that he wished to portray. By using unexpected depictions and media he noted that he sought to prevent his images from becoming what he termed “religious relics” (Semin, 1997, p. 47). These could not be questioned, or confronted because their familiarity gave them a veneer of ‘truth’.

Similarly, while creating art for this inquiry, I found that I was able to consider the images in novel ways by portraying events with an imaginative approach, such as changing the scale or colour of everyday objects so that they represented how I felt or dreamt about them. Alternatively, a realistic rendition of them would have led me to categorize these objects within an historical and cultural context so making it difficult for me to consider their meaning beyond the frames of reference I usually work with to make sense of the world (Csikszenthhalyi & Robinson, 1990).

Another dimension of my aesthetic experience as an artist was that of a ‘pleasurable encounter’. In the following sub-section I discuss the meaning of this term in relation to the study and how it related to the images I created.

4.3.3 The Aesthetic Experience as a Pleasurable Encounter

Initially, experiencing a pleasurable encounter may appear to have no connection to the adoption of an imaginative attitude. However, Higgins (2008) pointed to their relationship,

stating that during the creation of an art work both elements require the artist to engage in “several layers of reflection, [and] an appreciation of emotional nuance” (p. 112). But, unlike an imaginative attitude which represents the artist’s internal conception of an experience, a pleasurable encounter is connected to the unfolding development of an art work. It thus represents a distinct and important component of an aesthetic experience. In particular, a pleasurable encounter is connected to emotional responses and the intensity of the feelings experienced by the artist. Thus, in this study the concept of pleasure differs from the prevailing understanding that pleasure should induce “rapture” (Dewey, 1980, p. 129).

4.3.3.1 Pleasure in the creation of art

The concept of pleasure related to the ability to visually depict authentic emotions, whether these emotions were negative or positive. According to Higgins (2008), in the context of creating art the emotion of pleasure may be more usefully defined as an emotion that moves the heart of the artist rather than one that is experienced solely as joy. Thus, it is the presence of genuine feelings that arise when creating art that is seen as the source of a pleasurable encounter. This perception was re-iterated in a recorded interview with Jenny Watson (Watson, Hutchings & Lane, 1986). She noted that when she allowed what was in her heart to emerge in her work, she experienced pleasure. Similarly, my ability to feel pleasure when I created art was connected to my sense of visually expressing something sincere about my childhood migration

A related component of a pleasurable encounter, as it was understood in this research, is Korsmeyers’s (2006) understanding of the concept of a pleasurable encounter. She proposed that, when creating an art work, the experience of pleasure relates to the degree of intensity, attention or absorption the artist can achieve and the emotional arousal such attention brings them. This understanding mirrors Watson’s (1989) account of her creative work. In an interview she referred to her art making as being “urgent, passionate, spare, necessary [and] psychological” (p. 84). In this way Watson identified the creation of art as an emotional experience.

Similarly in generating art for my study I became aware that my desire and ability to create images was linked to a deep emotional and intellectual connection to the subject matter I wished to portray. Through my intense involvement with the topic, I sensed that my images

depicted something emotional about my experience. This belief gave me pleasure in being able to transform an internal experience into a visual form.

The sense of completing an image which was created in a state of intense emotional 'connection' has also been related to a qualitatively different pleasurable encounter: the pleasure an artist can feel when they complete an image which satisfies them.

4.3.3.2 Pleasure with the completed art work

A pleasurable encounter is understood as the outcome of an artist's handling of media and decision-making regarding the physical aspects of making the art work. The type of pleasurable encounter was illuminated by Buermeyer (1929) who explained that when an artist feels that he has achieved a successful depiction "the object [the subject matter] is no longer a bright haze but becomes a substantial form" (p. 79). In other words, a pleasurable release is felt by an artist when all the elements of their image are felt to be in the 'right' place. The anxiety that was present when the artist searched looking for an appropriate form or idea is finally dissipated (Budd, 2008). Furthermore, according to Budd (2008), reflecting on how elements of a work of art led to a satisfying representation of an experience also forms a significant part of an artist's pleasurable experience.

Buermeyer (1929) relates the pleasurable encounter to a more general human desire for transforming chaos into something communicable. For an artist, the ability to summarize an experience for the viewer through an art object is particularly significant because it is a place "from which distracting factors are excluded and things can be so controlled as to reveal their maximum significance" (Buermeyer, 1929, p. 83). In this way, the artist's ability to manipulate their communication is also perceived as a pleasurable encounter. However, the viewer's capacity to accept an artist's portrayal, even when the artist has created the image in a way that is self-satisfying, has been related to the viewer's particular aesthetic experience.

4.4 A VIEWER'S ACCEPTANCE OF AN ARTIST'S PORTRAYAL

As indicated earlier (Section 4.1), I identified portrayal as a reciprocal process that occurs between artist and viewer. In this process both parties engage in an aesthetic experience

which comprises an imaginative attitude and a pleasurable encounter. In the next two sections I discuss how the viewer's acceptance of a portrayal complements the artist's aesthetic experience, whilst, at the same time, includes features that relate to that person's unique experience of viewing art.

4.4.1 A Viewer's Imaginative Approach

A viewer's imaginative approach is enhanced through their engagement with the artist's imagination. In particular, the viewer is tied to particular methods of depiction created by the artist that can provoke their imagination. The viewer's connection to the artist's approach can also inspire them to think about the depicted event in a way that incorporates different, and perhaps surprising, elements. Finally, observing art with an imaginative attitude creates a particular partnership between an artist and a viewer as each viewer can expand, rather than discard, the vision portrayed by the artist. I begin by exploring the visual means by which an artist can foment an imaginative approach in the viewer.

4.4.1.1 The power of visual rhythms in promoting an imaginative approach

For the viewer apprehending a work created with an imaginative approach can potentially be stimulated by "visual rhythms" (Crowther, 2008, p. 38). In the context of this study the term rhythm signifies the "visual repetitions which admit continuation beyond the immediately given" (Crowther, 2008, p. 38). Whilst the idea of repetition in art can refer to patterns created by lines or brushstrokes, in my study the term rhythm refers to repetitive arrangements of elements within an image "that [are] open to alternative avenues of possible cognitive exploration" (Crowther, 2008, p. 39). Such rhythms may be represented by particular repeated visual elements, such as the use of stitching within an image, which can rouse the viewer's own imaginative spirit as they consider ways of understanding these elements.

In an interview, French artist Louise Bourgeois (1998) explained that "[visual] rhythm will be suggestive ... in a non-descriptive mode" (Bernadac & Orbrist, 1998, p. 75), suggesting that the content of an art work can act as a catalyst to the observer's imaginative conception of the piece. During the interview Bourgeois also noted that "as time goes by people will then see new things [in the art work], things the artist did not put there or did not know he (sic)

put there - the successive analogies or associations will be re-interpreted" (Bernadac & Orbrist, 1998, p. 75). In other words, the artist's imaginative approach can encourage a rhythm of imaginative viewing because the art work is not overly illustrative or descriptive. Instead, its elements are positioned in ways which encourages "analogies or associations of subjects to symbols" (Bernadac & Orbrist, 1998, p. 75) which could encourage the viewer to imagine alongside the artist.

I developed my understanding of how imagination is stimulated by visual rhythm when I viewed Watson's imagery in her 2007 show titled 'Material Evidence' (Section 4.2). Fabric was used in all the images she exhibited. In an essay about this exhibition, art critic Hawker (2005) noted that the fabrics Watson utilized "always leave me feeling ... always leave me thinking" (p.12). Hawker (2005) concluded that because we all encounter fabric in our day-to-day life, incorporating it into an art work "reminded us of our own experiences" (p.13). Similarly, the fabrics in this exhibition led me to regard this component of her images in novel ways. In particular, I experienced sensory memories of the materials I remembered in my family home and the specific concerns, aspirations and associations that were connected with them.

4.4.1.2 The power of active engagement in an imaginative approach

As a consequence of engaging imaginatively with the visual rhythms presented by an artist, a viewer can be inspired to take an active role in understanding an image (Crowther, 2008). In particular, such involvement can connect them to their "cognitive freedom" (Crowther, 2008, p. 39) and, consequently, enable them to be unconstrained and unconventional in their interaction with the portrayal. In other words, the dimension of "cognitive freedom" (Crowther, 2008, p. 39) can arise directly through the imaginative forms presented by an artist which encourage an "interplay between its phenomenological form and alternative avenues of possible cognitive exploration" (Crowther, 2008, p. 39).

My active engagement was provoked by Watson's non-literal portrayal (Section 4.4.1.1) which inspired me to thoughtfully 'play' with her depiction because I was able to consider the image in "allusive rather than explicit terms" (Crowther, 2008, p. 39). The pink fabric she utilized in her image (Section 4.2.1) was not illustrative of anything in particular and, therefore, allowed new ideas and fantasies to arise in me that were only tangentially related

to the fabric itself. As these thoughts emerged, a restructuring of my stored experiences and values took place in ways that went well beyond my initial engagement with the pink fabric.

As the viewer is able to fantasize and think about an image in new ways, they develop the potential to become a partner in the imaginative process rather than a recipient of the artist's imagination. This process can take place even when the viewer knows many things about the artist and the circumstances under which the art was created. The viewer can allow their imagination free rein, and put aside contextual factors, because the depictions are not expected to be recognized as 'facts'. Instead, they are accepted as portrayals of the artist's inventive engagement with the subject matter. In this way, the depictions by Boltanski, (Semin, 1997), Bourgeois, (Berdenac, 1996) and Watson (Hawker, 2005), which represent their realities in symbolic ways, can be endlessly re-storied as the viewer collaborates in developing the image's meaning.

As the viewer becomes inspired by artist's imaginative attitude they may find that the way their acceptance of an image alters. Graham (1997), a philosopher, noted that when a viewer approaches an image with an imaginative attitude the question that may be asked of a work of art changes from "Is this how it really was?" (p. 54) to "Does this make us alive to new aspects of this sort of occasion?" (p. 54). Thus, an imaginative attitude in the observer of art can illuminate or awaken them to an experience. Through such an awakening the viewer may overcome a tendency to "somnolence and apathy" (Greene, 2000, p. 35) that can be evoked when viewing an image which is presented as a fixed reality.

In the next section I discuss how a pleasurable encounter with art may be seen as an outcome of viewing art with an imaginative approach and how this experience also constitutes a reciprocal process between the artist and viewer.

4.4.2 A Viewer's Pleasurable Encounter

A pleasurable encounter for the viewer has been described by Carroll (2006) and Higgins (2008) as the emotional aspect of the aesthetic experience in which pleasure is the primary emotion. As in the artist's pleasurable encounter (Section 4.3.3), a viewer's pleasurable encounter with art is understood to mean more than "rapture" (Dewey, 1980, p. 129).

The pleasure experienced by a viewer has been described by Higgins (2008) as a refined emotion which “typically undergoes development over time and is connected to the moral and spiritual life of the viewer” (p. 106). So, any pleasure the viewer might experience is understood as encompassing, but not absolutely reliant on, sensory pleasure, such as ‘attractive’ colour or form. The pleasure is seen to be derived from the way that the viewer relates to aspects of the art work (Budd, 2008) and so not predominately a product of looking at something conventionally deemed to be ‘beautiful’. Rather, it is more closely connected to the viewer’s emotional reactions as they engage with all aspects of the art work.

4.4.2.1 Self-recognition as a pleasurable encounter

One way in which a viewer may experience pleasure when observing a work of art is through “recognition of one’s true self” (Higgins, 2008, p. 112). In other words, when elements of a work of art highlight an aspect of the viewer’s life, particularly aspects that may have remained unexamined for some reason, observing the art work may lead to what Higgins (2008) described as “a blissful” (p. 112) state. Such discovery can dispel an individual’s sense of unease and even despair that can arise when they feel unable to articulate, even to themselves, their core sense of self (Higgins, 2008; Fitzpatrick, 2010). Thus, when Bourgeois depicted imaginative visual portrayals of her difficult relationship with her father she “unconsciously tap[ped] into great primordial myths (Bernadac, 1996, p. 9) which her viewers might, therefore, recognize as ‘belonging’ to their life.

The artist, Christian Boltanski (1996), sought to connect with his viewers’ lives by including everyday objects, “the debris of life”, such as old clothes, photographs, biscuit tins, into depictions of his life and the lives of others. By incorporating personal objects which he identified as being part of himself in some way, he also sought to remind people of aspects of their life that were connected to these articles (Boltanski, 1996).

4.4.2.2 Connectedness as a pleasurable encounter

Beyond the pleasure that can be achieved through a recognition of self, pleasure that can also be gained when viewing art is understood as connecting to the world beyond one’s personal interests. In an art catalogue essay, Fitzpatrick (2010), a curator, noted that an

understanding that one's own concerns are shared by others can arise when viewing art. Existentialists, such as Kafka (1992), Sartre (1948) and Tillich (1973), have written about the divide that many people feel between themselves and others. Existential psychologist, Yalom (1980), pointed out that "no matter how close each of us becomes to another, there remains a final unbridgeable gap" (p. 7) which we all wish to overcome and which, according to Fitzpatrick (2010), causes humans a sense of "loneliness and isolation" (p. 14).

When we confront the full implications of a visual depiction we may connect momentarily with others, and so our existential pain can be eased for a time. In this sense, Boltanski's (1996) use of everyday items can be seen as a potent symbolic reminder to viewers of the existence of a common human experience, an existence which I endorse. Indeed, in the creation of my art I chose to incorporate materials from my domestic life, as well as traditional art materials. My hope was that viewers could relate to these materials and experience a pleasurable connection to both universal and particular aspects of my images.

Feeling a sense of connection to others can also potentially encourage viewers to gain an awareness of alternate ways of living and strengthen their ability "to empathize with the concerns of others" (Higgins, 2008, p. 14) whose experience they do not share. The ability to empathize in this way can potentially provide "a quiet pleasure" (Higgins, 2008, p. 116). Whilst a sense of empathy may develop when listening to music, reading a book, or viewing drama or dance, an engagement with visual art has unique qualities which may aid in the development of empathy and, thus, of pleasurable feelings. A viewer has, for example, multiple opportunities to re-view an image and, therefore, the time to identify and consider all aspects of the image. The physical distance between the creator and the viewer, which encourages the latter's imagination, also provides physical and emotional space for the viewer to become preoccupied with the image without having to take into account the feelings or interpretation of the artist (Higgins, 2008). As well, viewing visual art and gaining empathy for others may have the capacity to draw the viewer into considering their own philosophical and moral positions regarding the content of the portrayal. Paradoxically, such reflection and empathy may reveal additional aspects of their self which may have, until that point, been largely unexplored by them.

4.4.2.3 Ambivalence in a pleasurable encounter

In some circumstances an awareness of previously unexamined attitudes may also evoke a sense of “illicit pleasure” (Kaplan, 2007, p. 1), particularly when a viewer has had an enjoyable response to images which represent painful or traumatic events. The experience of pleasure in these circumstances has been described as “constituting a betrayal” (Kaplan, 2007, p. 2) of the suffering that is depicted. For example, when Boltanski used altered photographs of children to portray those killed during the Holocaust some reviewers noted that these works softened the brutality of the children’s deaths because the images could be perceived as illicit enjoyment (Kaplan, 2006).

However, representing painful or traumatic events in ways that seek to provide a pleasurable sensory encounter may encourage viewers to explore their reactions because they are able to face a painful topic. In this way an encounter with an image which provides sensory pleasure can be seen as having pedagogic value (Kaplan, 2007). In seeking to create visually pleasing images of aspects of my migration which were seemed now to represent negative aspects of my migration, I also sought to provide the viewer with a pleasurable experience, and thus a space from which they could engage with the depicted subject matter.

In addition to pleasurable encounters that may lead viewers to self-knowledge and engagement with painful concerns, a pleasurable encounter can arise through an engagement with art that represents the unknown, the mysterious and the uncertain. In such art work the viewer may take pleasure in being confronted with an issue that they are undecided about or do not understand. Such confrontation can take place because visual art “is a place from which distracting factors can be excluded and things can ... reveal their maximum significance” (Buermeyer, 1929, p. 83).

By experiencing the duality, or ambivalence, in an image that is sometimes experienced in life, a viewer can experience a pleasure which is connected to a sense of being involved in “emotional depth” (Korsmeyer, 2006, p. 59). Bourgeois was adept at depicting such ambiguity in her art. In an interview with Bernadac (1996) she termed this turmoil “Tourette’s Syndrome – that is, saying one thing while thinking another” (Bernadac, 1996, p. 10). When she constructed a series of room-sized sculptural ‘refuges’ which viewers could

physically enter, she remarked that she was presenting “the security of the lair which can also be a trap” (Bernadac, 1996, p. 65). Her ability to depict both aspects simultaneously in a visual form gave her audience the opportunity to savour the puzzling aspects of her constructions.

In creating art for this study I actively welcomed and enjoyed the emergence of elements which appeared contradictory, seeking to avoid the temptation to create images about being a child migrant in which every element seemed a logical fit. Instead, by retaining contradictory components I hoped to provide viewers with an opportunity to engage in a pleasurable confrontation with their own understanding of these inconsistencies.

In summary, the elements of imagination and pleasure constitute aspects of the viewer’s experience of aesthetic experience and, in my study, were deemed parts of the complex reciprocal process between artist and viewer. Another aspect of the aesthetic experience, that of viewing visual art as an holistic object, relates solely to viewers. In the next sub-section I discuss this aspect.

4.5 VIEWING ART AS AN INDIVISIBLE OBJECT

Viewing an art work as an holistic entity, rather than a divisible object, helps to maintain the integrity of the depiction. The viewer is able to experience the image rather than adopt an overly intellectual attitude in which the content of image itself is marginalized. Moreover, when the integrity of a depiction is maintained the viewer’s responses are incorporated in the viewing process.

This position has been articulated by the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce (1912/2007). He asserted that an art work is a synthesis of the sensuous, intellectual and emotional aspects of the artist and so could not be segmented in any way. He thus spoke of the “indivisibility” (Croce, 1912/2007, p. 20) of a work of art and argued that its value is most potent when it is perceived in its entirety. Furthermore, Croce (1912/2007) stated that what is expressed in a work of art forms an organic whole rather than a sum of independent parts. He added that a person’s desire to identify and categorize the various elements of a painting comes from a yearning to impose a logical system of order on an image rather than

from a desire to gain an understanding of it. He spoke of how such categorization takes place:

He [the viewer] may seek out the nature and relation of things there expressed. Thus those pictures and compositions each of which is an individually inexpressible (sic) in logical terms are gradually resolved into universals and abstractions such as costumes, landscapes, portraits and the like. They are often also resolved into quantitative categories such as miniature pictures ... and the like. (Croce, 1912/2007, p. 35)

The division of the art work into categories renders its richness invisible as the observer concentrates only on the image in terms of the category under review (Croce, 1912/2007). Furthermore, Croce (1912/2007) maintained that the tendency of people to comply with some form of categorization leads them to being caught in “meshes of phraseology” (p. 38) rather than to engage with the entirety of the work of art. According to Croce (1912/2007), the categorization of art work, such as landscape or abstraction, has led to the formation of language that describes the classifications and blinds the viewer to any other qualities of an art work. When art is viewed in this way a space is created in which intuition, among other qualities that do not rely on logical thinking, inform the viewer of the meaning of the depiction. Morgan (2000), an artist and educator, has agreed that Croce (1912/2007) defined engagement with the entirety of an art object as part of “intuitive perception: a synergetic reading of ontological perception” (p. 11). In other words, she believed that Croce’s (1912/2007) notion of viewing an art work in its entirety refers to connecting to the image’s essential nature in ways that go beyond intellectual analysis.

Croce (1912/2007) also stated that form and content in art are inextricably joined:

it makes no difference ...whether art is presented as content or form as long as it is understood that content is given form, and form is filled (sic) [with content], that the feeling is figured feeling and figure is a felt figure. (p. 29)

Put simply, he maintained that aspects of an image cannot be separated and that when they are experienced as a whole they provide the viewer with an experience that is greater than the sum of each part. He also proclaimed that if the various components of a work of art were to be analysed piece by piece the division would “annihilate the work of art [in the same way] as dividing the organism into brain, nerves muscles and so on turns the living being into a corpse” (Croce, 1912/2007, p. 20). Finally, he argued that the separation of

works of art into various categories would blind viewers to the ways in which art could violate and extend established ideas beyond any known categories and thus allow “new broadenings” (Croce, 1912/2007, p. 37) to emerge.

Manguel (2000), an art historian, also offered a description of the concept of “new broadenings” which emerge when an art work is considered in its entirety:

The image ... exists somewhere ... between that which the painter has imagined, and that which the painter has put on the board; between that which we can name and that which the painter’s contemporaries could name; between which we remember and what we learn; between the acquired common vocabulary of a social world and a deeper vocabulary of ancestral and private symbols. When we try to read a painting, it may seem to us lost in an abyss of misunderstanding. (Manguel, 2000, p. 14)

In other words, like Croce, Manguel (2000) stated that when viewers immerse themselves within the entirety of an image they can enter the complex mysterious world of a portrayal. Such a focus would encompass fragile, buried, inconsistent aspects and conscious and unconscious elements. If, as viewers, we could be open all of these elements at the same time our experience of the image would be enlarged.

In line with the Croce’s (1912/2007) views, I sought to develop research practices that allowed me to explore the content of my imagery without dividing the depictions in any way. I also drew on the insights of Buermyere (1929), Budd (2008), Carroll (2006), Crowther, (2008), Dewey (1980), Higgins (2008) and Kaplan (2006) into the ways in which an aesthetic experience enriches the viewing of art.

4.6 SUMMARY

In this chapter I have detailed the conceptual framework that informed the development of my creative work and the contemplative process that I then followed. Two concepts captured my notion of portrayal: aesthetic experience and the indivisibility of an art work.

The first concept, aesthetic experience, relates to the dynamic interplay between artist and viewer. The artist’s aesthetic experience is understood to impinge directly on the viewer’s aesthetic experience. In turn, the latter’s experience can lead them to expand their grasp of the art work. In this way an understanding of an art work is enlarged and developed through the aesthetic experience of both the artist and viewer. I identified an imaginative approach

and a pleasurable encounter with art as the two salient features of an aesthetic experience. An imaginative approach, as it was understood in the study, provides the artist with an avenue through which they can present their experience in symbolic forms. Such rhythms can, in turn, stimulate the imaginative approach of the viewer. Thus, a viewer's understanding of an image can be enhanced beyond the confines of a literal depiction of an event or experience.

I surmised that a pleasurable encounter occurs when the artist becomes emotionally engaged with their art work. In addition, this encounter intensifies as an artist discovers ways to adequately channel their emotions into their art work, and thus arrive at a satisfactory depiction. The artist's capacity to be emotionally engaged with their art is also seen to have a flow-on effect to the viewer. Thus, viewing an art work, which comes into being through an artist's emotional engagement, is more likely to result in the creation of a portrayal with which the viewer can connect. Through such reciprocal emotional engagement a viewer can potentially gain self-knowledge, and a sense of connectedness and empathy with other people which can be experienced as pleasure. These gains can generate a sense a pleasure even when an art work depicts painful or traumatic aspects of life.

The second foundational concept was that of indivisibility. Indivisibility relates to the ability to appreciate the totality of an image. In doing so viewers are more likely to gain a rich and comprehensive sense of what is conveyed in the portrayal. The ability to appreciate an image as an holistic entity also has the capacity to enliven the art work for the viewer. It enhances their capacity to appreciate the essence, energy and attitude contained in the image.

In the following chapter I discuss how these concepts informed the research practices of each stage of the research process.

CHAPTER FIVE

MY RESEARCH PROCESSES:

THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND UTILIZATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed earlier (Section 2.4), the study portrayed, by means of visual art, my experience of being a child migrant. Through an examination of my images I anticipated that new understandings of this experience could be generated for me and those who are involved in the care and education of child migrants. At the same time, I hoped that this visual portrayal of my experience could engage a wide cross-section of people in conversations about the subjective experience of being a child migrant. In the previous chapter I discussed aesthetic experience and the indivisibility of art as the concepts which shaped the study. In this chapter I describe and explore the development of the processes that I employed to carry out my inquiry, then how I utilized them. Finally, I elaborate on my rationale for presenting my art works in a separate volume.

The processes that I used were developed specifically for the purpose of this study. Indeed, increasingly, unique research processes are being created for the emerging body of art based research (Honeywill, 2003; Loi, 2006; Scott-Hoy, 2000). This mode of research has been defined in various ways (Finley, 2008; McNiff, 2008; Rose, 2001). I adopted Eisner's (2008a) definition of art based research: "the imaginative and expressive crafting of a form that enlarges our understanding of what was going on" (p. 18). His description highlights an essential point of difference between art based studies and other forms of inquiry, specifically, that this mode of research uses an artistic product as its primary source of data. Hence, the processes which are described in this chapter were constructed to take account of the centrality of art in this form of inquiry.

5.2 THE ORIGINS OF MY RESEARCH PROCESSES

The processes, or strategies, detailed here were drawn, and adapted, from qualitative research approaches, in particular those employed in the study of the experiences of health

care recipients (Drew, Duncan & Sawyer, 2010; Farmer, 2002; Lichfield & Chater, 2007; Phelps, Hodgson, McCammon & Lamson, 2009)). In addition, I constructed a number of strategies from processes utilized in contemporary art therapy practice.

My attitude to the formation of research processes was informed initially by Barrett's (2007) discussion of art based research. She commented that, in this form of research, processes should not be employed rigidly at the outset of the research journey; they should remain malleable, yielding to the demands of the inquiry as it progresses. Strategies should, therefore, remain emergent rather than be pre-determined. Barrett's (2007) discussion gave voice to the struggle that I had experienced in my early attempts to identify 'specific' research processes. As I searched for an appropriate plan of action I found none that would enable me to achieve the aims of my study. This realization led me to consider incorporating a number of strategies (Section 2.1). After encountering Barrett's (2007) views I began to consider and adapt research processes in response to the emergent needs of my inquiry. In doing so, the research proceeded in a seemingly organic, naturally evolving, manner.

In addition to Barrett's (2007) characterization of art based research, my understanding of how to construct a suitable research process developed through my reading of Haseman's (2007) analysis of art based research approaches. He argued that these differed widely as each art based researcher employs a unique combination of media in their desire to achieve their inimitable research goal. Haseman (2007) maintained, therefore, that researchers need to incorporate processes which are traditionally used in other disciplines for different purposes and to modify them in ways that seem appropriate for their specific art based project. He argued that the choice of research strategy should be instigated and led by the demands of the creative practice rather than by the demands of a specific research strategy. Such a focus, he believed, would ensure that the creative work would drive the research. To this end, my research process was driven by the need to ensure that the creative focus of the study was of primary importance and not subsumed by procedural imperatives.

Other researchers have addressed the topic of using 'mixed' research techniques. Reason (1998), for example, argued for a research approach that "goes through several cycles as ideas, practice and experience are systematically honed and refined" (p. 6). Haseman (2007)

broadened Reason's (1998) research approach "to include the very way in which research is reported and knowledge claims proposed and examined" (p. 156). In other words, he postulated that the use of multiple research approaches can contribute to the emergence of new ways of knowing. Thus, by allowing the art to dictate the development of my study I anticipated that previously unexplored aspects of my migration experience could emerge.

In summary, in keeping with Barrett's (2007) and Haseman's (2007) contentions I employed diverse research processes as the study developed, adapting them to suit the particular requirements of the inquiry. The remainder of this chapter consists of sections which follow the sequence of the inquiry process: first, a description of how and why I came to choose certain ways of creating art; second, a description of how each process was utilized in the study; third, an overview of the ways in which I used the art to arrive at themes; and, fourth, an account of how I present the body of art. As visual art led the inquiry, a discussion of the processes I used to create this body of art is explored in the following section.

5.3 THE CHALLENGE OF THEORIZING NEW ART MAKING PROCESSES

As a visual artist I had not give much thought to the concepts that propelled the way I would go about creating art. I came to understand that the notions of the phenomenological researcher Colaizzi (1978) and of the art therapists McNiff (1998) and Thomson (1997), whose ideas were familiar to me, imbued my creative approach. Aspects of Schon's (1987) ideas on reflective practice also provided me with a way to think retrospectively about how my art work was conceived and carried out. Each writer emphasized the importance of starting a creative work without having a formative image. In other words, they provided me with perspectives and concrete recommendations on how to produce imagery which was not simply a visual representation of my pre-conceived ideas. Their processes are outlined in the following section. In addition, I detail other techniques which I utilized during the creation of my art work as I searched for ways to enhance my capacity to create original imagery. The processes which follow were instrumental in allowing me to consider my experience with 'fresh eyes'.

5.3.1 Creating a Space for the Emergence of Original Imagery

According to Schopenhauer (1818/1966), the creation of novel imagery requires an inversion of one's inclination. Gardner (1963) explained that such a "reversal of will" (p. 202) would allow for the emergence of imagery that was "independent of the patterns, schemes and set responses of ordinary existence" (p. 202). So I sought a practice through which I could set aside my known beliefs, opinions and prejudices (Section 2.6.2). Colaizzi (1978) named this technique "bracketing" (p. 50). As he did not specify set steps on how to undertake bracketing in art based research, I took up this task. In doing so I followed the ideas of McNiff (1998) and Thomson (1997) who, while not employing the term bracketing, explored the idea of beginning a work of art with "blankness - an empty circle, emptiness of ideas" (Thomson, 1997, p. 48).

In addition to the need to bracket, Thomson (1997) proposed that the use of novel materials could assist in moving the artist beyond their current ideas: "In the use of materials the painter...encounters something other than her conscious will, something which demands consideration, adjustment and a readiness to change course" (p. 62). In other words, as one uses new materials, habitual rituals and old patterns of thought are broken and new pathways to creation are forged.

In response to the processes outlined by McNiff (1998) and Thomson (1997), I decided to set aside the art materials I used regularly and brought unfamiliar media and implements into my studio. These consisted of found objects, paper, such as old wrapping paper and pages of discarded books and magazines, coloured inks, sewing needles and threads as well as coloured pencils and gouache. In doing so I was relinquishing the printmaking techniques I had worked with over the last 15 years as well as my preference for creating black and white imagery.

In addition to changes in media, I followed McNiff's (1998) suggestion that alterations in the environment, and in the way an artist sets about working, may create conditions for the emergence of fresh ideas. I decided to use the studio floor rather than a table as my work surface, thus modifying my posture and sight line. As well, instead of enlarging my images from small sketches, I decided to create each piece of art with no preliminary drawing

whatsoever. Thus, I entered my art making process without the well-worn series of procedures which had marked my art practice to date.

5.3.2 My Experience of Engaging in My Art Creation Process

The changes in my modes of creation were deliberately physically and emotionally destabilizing and I was aware that as I began my creative work I had no 'map' to follow. I had decided that these new ways of creating images might assist me in circumnavigating the control I usually wanted over my art work. In my first session I sat on my studio floor amongst my new materials and thought in general about my experience of being a child migrant as I looked and handled the materials before me. I used my senses of touch, smell and sight to seek connections between the materials and my chosen subject.

Over the first few days I put together and dismantled a number of collages in which I incorporated papers, photographs, threads and fabrics. I covered canvases and papers with a variety of colours and media, such as paint, pastel, charcoal and pencil, and experimented with creating images of various sizes. Finally, I settled on certain practices that I felt allowed me to portray my experience of being a child migrant. In particular, I decided to begin my work with watercolours, black and coloured pencils, and to incorporate found objects as collage material. Also, I decided that my images would not exceed the dimensions of an A4 page. This creative approach marked the way I set about working during subsequent sessions in my art studio.

As I completed a number of works I began to see connections between the way the art works were developing and the ideas of Schon (1987). Unlike Colaizzi (1978), McNiff (1998) and Thomson (1997), Schon (1987) furnished me with language to describe how the work progressed rather than how to create art. His concepts gave me a way to think about what had been, until then, an intuitive process and enabled me to describe how my intention to create fresh imagery (Section 3.3.1) was enacted. In particular, his explanation of how musicians improvise music resonated with me and captured my creation of art.

Schon (1987) compared his "reflection-in-practice" (p. 30) procedure to the way jazz musicians improvise together. He described the way in which they listen to each others' music as well as their own and how they intuit where the music is going while

simultaneously adjusting their playing accordingly: “Each player makes on-line inventions and responds to the surprises triggered by the inventions of the other players. But the collective process of musical invention is organized around an underlying structure” (Schon, 1987, p. 30).

A similar process of improvisation took place in my art work. A responsive process occurred between me and my creations. In this process the “underlying structure” of my art work was not musical theory or convention but, rather, a desire to achieve the goal of portraying my childhood migration experience. I found that the content or form of the art also emerged through a “metaphorical conversation” (Schon, 1987, p. 31) between myself and the imagery that I was creating; for example, my artistic response to visual cues, such as laying a particular colour on paper, connected me, at times, with a memory or feeling related to my migration experience. The memory led me to look through the materials that I had assembled and to create a visual response to their colour. My reactions entailed cutting shapes from a particular material or drawing lines over the colour or even scraping some paint off the canvas or paper. Each response led to the next phase of the metaphorical conversation. As well, Schon’s (1987) descriptions of how improvised responses to a particular musical theme can lead to new musical inventions stimulated me to reflect on how the images I created came about through a series of combinations and re-combinations of visual elements, all of which were connected to the theme of my inquiry. While being visually similar, these combinations were, nevertheless, unique and allowed me to identify the subtlety of aspects of my migration experience.

During my time in the studio I continued to look for ways to represent this experience with an unprejudiced mind (Section 5.3.1). As I employed the techniques outlined by McNiff (1998) and Thomson (1997), and as I looked at the early images I had created, I found myself paying more attention to associations, ideas, emotions, images, smells or sounds that entered my thoughts. I actively pursued these associations as a way of influencing the beginning of the next work. Very often aspects of a particular image impelled me to look at personal photographs or letters. As well, elements of images inspired me to seek information about subjects related to my migration, such as children’s Hebrew literature (Cohen, 2005), the Israeli Diaspora (Gilbert, 2008) and life in Melbourne during the 1960s (Lewis, 1995). I also searched in cupboards for items, such as clothing, toys or jewellery, that

were referenced in an image. Handling these items and my reading of them gave rise to other thoughts which I then explored in subsequent images. Frequently I took the time to write down some of my associations, sometimes in the form of abbreviated stories or poems. These writings were the stepping stones that allowed me to access additional connections between my old and new images; for example, a photograph or an item I read led me to re-examine images that I had made in my studio and to re-examine some element in them for further visual exploration.

The process that Schon (1987) termed “metaphorical conversation” (p. 51) was not linear. Sometimes I found myself creating work about disparate situations; at these times the dialogue between images disappeared. Nevertheless, visual links between images were more common than not and the analogy of invention to improvisation (Schon, 1987) drove the development of my art during the research period.

5.3.3 The Timeframe of the Research Processes

A representation of the study processes is provided as a visual reference of the times taken to undertake the research procedures (Table 5.1). As I reflect on this timeframe it is evident that a large portion of time was spent on creating the art. This allocation seems appropriate as the images constituted the data upon which the study rested. As well, the chart reveals that the process of identifying the themes was undertaken over a concentrated, comparatively short, time span. It may be that this work required such an intense period of immersion for me to be able to make the intuitive leap needed to name my discovered themes.

Table 5.1: Timeframe of the Research Processes

Research Process	Number of Block Sessions	Length of Sessions	Total Period over which The Processes were Undertaken
Art Making Process	Multiple	Unspecified hours over one or two weeks	Three years
Process of Contemplation	Three	Two to three hours	One week
Deepening the Contemplation Process	Three	Two hours	One week
Distillation of Themes: 1) Re-reading notes ----- 2) Identifying significant statements	Two ----- One	Two hours ----- Four hours	Two days
Arranging Theme Clusters	Two	Three hours	Two days
Validation Process	One	Two hours	Two hours

An examination of the processes follows.

5.3.4 The Art Making Process

The art making process was undertaken over three years. However, I did not create art continuously during this period. Instead, I worked in short intensive bursts, each lasting no longer than two weeks. I would then leave the created images in the studio for periods lasting from one week to two months (Table 5.1).

These breaks have been described and understood in a number of ways. Allen (1995) evocatively characterized pauses in the creative process as “dreaming the dream onward” (p. 22), while Ghiselin (1985) noted that creating art required “long periods of alternating consciousness” (p. 20). In other words, the creation of art takes place during the making of the images, and also during periods of “unconscious activity” (Ghiselin, p. 20) in which no ‘physical’ aspect of art work is undertaken. Similarly, Malchiodi (2006) described these breaks as periods of incubation. She observed that during breaks from the physical work of making art artists move into a period of “mental relaxation, a non-ordinary state of consciousness ... which often entails turning [the] conscious mind away from the problem at hand ... so that new insights about the image can break through” (Malchiodi, 2006, p. 66).

During my breaks from actively creating art I spent time thinking about the physical attributes of the images and examining associations that they provoked. I would then return to them and add or delete elements or sometimes completely re-work an image which failed to resonate with me in some way. The impulses to change my imagery were based on “intuition, improvisation and play” (Malchiodi, 2006, p. 66), and represented the outcome of unconscious and conscious processes which occurred throughout my involvement in art making.

5.3.5 The End of the Art Making Process

The process of making art did not end abruptly. Instead, I slowly became aware that no new images were emerging in the work I was producing. Descriptions and clarifications about the end of the creative process have been noted by a number of writers. For example, the conclusion of the creative process has been likened by Ghiselin (1985) to the growth of a child in the womb and its subsequent birth, a process that takes time and the end point of which is reached when the child emerges finally from the birth canal. He commented that

“the comparison [to gestation] is a good one as it nicely communicates the important fact that the [creative] process is organic” (Ghiselin, 1985, p. 11). In other words, he viewed the creative process as having similar characteristics to a natural, living course of action which the artist can be aware of, but not control. He added that the decision to end a particular creative process is not so much an unconscious decision as a pre-verbal one. This notion is echoed by Malchiodi (2006) who stated that a feeling akin to satisfaction is experienced when one feels that a work is finished, a feeling which can be difficult to express. Similarly, the end of my art making period was difficult for me to express verbally. Instead, its culmination was heralded by a strong feeling of satiety. I found myself feeling metaphorically ‘full’ and no longer driven by a ‘hunger’ to create more images about my experience of being a child migrant.

A process of contemplation marked a transition between the physical work of creating art and my reflections on it. An understanding of why and how I undertook this phase of the study is presented in the next section.

5.4 MY PRACTICE OF CONTEMPLATION

In this inquiry contemplation was defined as a sustained process of immersion in all of the elements that made up an image (Manguel, 2000). It was an essential aspect of the research process as it had the potential to enable me to recognise what I had portrayed. In other words, through contemplation something beyond an aesthetic experience could be identified and articulated, leading to the possibility of new insights and learning.

My search for an approach to contemplation involved shifting through conceptions and practices which related to specific categories of analysis or interpretation, including perceptual (Arnheim, 1972), psychological (Schavarién, 1999) and symbolic (Gage, 1999) systems of observing imagery. As this study focused on discovering what my images portrayed about my childhood migration I sought a practice which advocated, and involved, the examination of the contents of the images without filtering them through a specific theoretical prism. Sibbett’s (2005) concept of the liminal space provided me with a beginning point for this phase of my inquiry.

5.4.1 Conceptualizing My Process of Contemplation

The word liminal comes from the Latin 'limen' or threshold, and was first utilized in the field of anthropology (Heilbrun, 1999; Herman, 2005; Sibbett, 2005). It denoted a period of transformation or transition experienced temporarily by someone with no defined social role (Sibbett, 2005), with the liminal 'space' affording them the possibility of gaining an enlarged perspective on life. The term has been generalized beyond its original definition and is now used to describe any in-between time "when one is poised on uncertain ground [before] leaving one condition ... and entering another state" (Heilbrun, 1999, p. 3).

Occupying a liminal space can thus be viewed as being in a state of uncertainty, a position rich with ambiguity but also with the possibility of creative fermentation (Heilbrun, 1999; Herman, 2005; Sibbett, 2005). This position of equivocation and creative excitement arises because a person finds themselves "betwixt and between" (Sibbett, 2005, p. 12), uncommitted to any position, and thus able to consider and, metaphorically play with, multiple perspectives.

Similarly, the artists Sava and Nuutinen (2003) described the idea of entering an "inter-space" (p. 521) when looking at art. In the process of observing art they noted that a metaphoric space exists between the action of looking and the creation of the words used to describe what is seen. Furthermore, they identified the inter-space as a gap in which nebulous reflections about imagery could develop via an engagement with a work of art. McNiff (1998), who has written widely on the topic of creativity, supported the later work of Sava and Nuutinen (2003). He noted that as artists allow themselves to remain suspended in an amorphous state they avoid imposing their intellectual judgements prematurely. Instead, the image comes to shape their understanding. In doing so what is contained in the art work can be experienced and understood in modes that are "outside the margins of our [the artists'] experience" (Herman, 2005, p.471) and allow them to "see new patterns" (Herman, 2005, p. 471). The description of the inter-space strongly echoes the notion of the liminal space.

In summary, the concepts of liminal space and inter-space shaped the ways I looked at my art. Betensky (1998) and McNiff (1998) identified a variety of procedures which I adopted,

allowing me to contemplate my imagery whilst occupying either the liminal or the inter-space.

5.4.2 Engaging in the Process of Contemplation

To begin my process of contemplation I decided to create physical distance between myself and the images I created. This practice was advocated by Betensky (1995) who used the technique when engaging with her art therapy patients. She suggested that patients can evolve into “artist[s]-turned-beholder[s]” (Betensky, 1995, p.16) by distancing themselves, emotionally and psychologically, from their work. They are then able to ‘see’ it in novel ways. Indeed, I found that physical distancing did allow me to view my art in an unfamiliar way, thus disrupting any pattern of analysis that I might have unconsciously constructed since creating it.

To distance myself from my work I placed my images along the walls of my studio and stood in the centre of the room, turning slowly to look at each image. Over a week I spent two to three hours every second day contemplating the pieces in silence. At the beginning of this process, having lined the images along the wall of my studio in no particular order, I viewed them one at a time. After looking at them I would let my eyes return to the image that I found most visually compelling. After this initial viewing I would look at each of the images at other sessions. My focus changed from one interval of viewing to another, according to my mood. After contemplating the images in this way I would move them, grouping them in various configurations - by subject matter, colour or media. I ended each session by placing them randomly against the wall as a way of ensuring that some attention had been given to every image.

When I first surveyed the images during the contemplative stage I was struck by how their appearance seemed to have altered since I had created them. For example, areas of an image which had dominated my sight during the creation stage had almost vanished and colours appeared to have differing intensities. Also, from a physical distance I no longer felt the emotions I had experienced when struggling with various technical aspects of the creative work. Instead, I found myself looking at the images as if someone else had created them. Indeed, I felt that my initial ‘certainty’ of their content, captured in descriptive notes

made during my initial viewings, were leading me from the liminal or inter-space I still wished to occupy. I began to seek a way of delaying my departure from that state. I found that a number of writers had broached this topic.

McNiff (1998) and Siegesmund and Cahnman-Taylor (2008) cautioned that if artists view their work in a rushed way they will restrict the richness of their experience because they have not allowed their reactions to an image to surface. Furthermore, a lack of time to contemplate art could lead to a “withered and denuded” (Siegesmund & Cahnman-Taylor, 2008, p. 232) data bank from which to build an understanding of the event being investigated. Therefore, I felt impelled to deepen my contemplative practice. Working with a series of questions which I adapted from Betensky’s (1998) and McNiff’s (1998) clinical art therapy practice, I sought to return my attention to the physicality of the images.

5.4.3 Intensifying My Contemplation Process

In order to intensify my contemplation of the imagery I began to ask myself the following questions: How does my eye move through the picture? Are there areas that immediately catch my attention? Did I overlook some elements? I also let my eyes pass over each work section by section, consciously taking in colours, textures, contrasts, light and dark aspects of the image, edges, figures, background placements, spatial relationships, verticals, horizontals, shapes, forms and lines. I remained alert to any melody or song that came to my mind and allowed myself to physically move in response to the images. Then I recorded the answers to my questions in a notebook, jotting down any associations I made between my images and songs or movements.

As I funnelled all of my attention to the physical minutiae of the works, I sensed that my prior inclination to comment intellectually on the work faded. I felt that I was able enter a space in which I could metaphorically hover over the work, letting it fill my senses rather than seeking to make sense of it. Over a week I spent three two-hour sessions observing each of my images again. My notebook became filled with short meditations and descriptions about the images in front of me. For example, on September 12, 2007, whilst looking at a number of images that seemed to represent our family home in Israel, I wrote:

I grew locked, close to, absorbed in, and indivisible from, stuck (glued) to exiled people who were homesick, whose past was torn (torn paper?) in brutal ways. Meals, home, clothes (invisible, lost?) constant alienation, strangeness and sadness over a lost past, no details, in this image, my own migration continued something that I had breathed in daily anyway, (layers, overlays, transparencies, no depth).

These short notes captured the sensory richness that I was absorbing during my ‘looking’. I discovered that I was gleaning information through a “layered, cacophonous and ambiguous” approach (Siegesmund & Cahnman-Taylor, 2008, p. 323). But at the end of a period of looking, I realized that I had arrived at no clear conclusions. Instead, I found that when I had taken the time to observe all of the physical elements of an art work, a sensory bank of “pre-analytic, sensory, impressions” (Siegesmund & Cahnman-Taylor, 2008, p. 232) accumulated. These ‘banks’ ultimately led to the development of an expanded discourse on my experience of childhood migration. In other words, through an observation of the physical aspects of my art work combinations of my sensory memory arose. These did not consist of a cogent logical understanding of the event being portrayed, rather, they expanded the ways in which I could think about the imagery. Thus, the notes which I accumulated during the looking period as well as the images themselves, were the store of information which led to my reflections on the art. I ceased to write after a week as I understood that I had come to a point of saturation which marked a natural end to my reflective immersion process.

In the subsequent stage of the inquiry I moved from recording what I observed in my images to seeking to identify the thoughts and perspectives contained in these portrayals of my experience of being a child migrant. I now offer a description of the processes I undertook to distil the essential themes in my art work that emerged through my contemplation of it.

5.5 DISTILLING THEMES THAT EMERGED THROUGH CONTEMPLATION

The processes for distilling themes remained within the parameters of my conceptualization of art based research (Section 4.3.2.2). In accordance with this understanding the identified themes are intended to stimulate discussion rather constitute definitive conclusions to the research question. Also, my reading of the art is not deemed to be finite: the themes I distilled following this contemplative process may differ from those I distil at other junctures in my life.

Movement from contemplation to the distillation of themes entailed change in the question I was asking my images (Sava & Nuutinen, 2003). It changed from “How do I look?” (Sava & Nuutinen, 2003, p. 522) to “What am I?” (Sava & Nuutinen, 2003, p. 522). Thus, the focus of my inquiry moved to a more intense exploration of the term ‘portray’ to encompass psychological, emotional and spiritual aspects (Section 2.2.1). I looked for a way to distil themes which could be utilized as a template for examining and re-examining the images. In this way, the themes would represent “less of a product and more of a process - an always becoming” (Day-Scalter, 2003, p. 623). In other words, the procedures I utilized did not preclude the capacity of images to stimulate questions and expose dilemmas for the artist and the viewer (Sava & Nuutinen, 2003).

5.5.1 The Process of Distillation

The procedure I used to extract themes was adapted from Colaizzi’s (1978) process of synthesizing data and distilling themes. I was drawn to the phenomenological procedure he outlined as he set to distil themes in a way that “neither denigrates nor transforms experience into operationally defined behaviour” (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 54). In other words, he aspired to create a practice which would capture the essence of the experience being investigated, not re-vision it according to a pre-set formula. This intention resonated with the goals of art based research. The process was undertaken over four days.

The first step I undertook entailed a close and thorough reading and re-reading of the written text, in my case my notes, so that a profound understanding of nuances could be identified and absorbed. This step was tackled over two days during which I spent two hours each day re-reading my notes. As I perused my jottings a number of times I began to appreciate different aspects of this material. In particular, I became aware of my language and of my tendency to repeat certain words many times. As well, I noticed the ebb and flow of my observations, particularly both the richness and sketchy nature of my descriptions.

After two days of re-reading I had reached saturation in relation to my understanding of the notes and so I proceeded to the second step of my distillation process. This act involved underlining phrases or sentences termed by Colaizzi (1978) “significant statements” (p. 57), that is, those which intuitively seemed important. This work was undertaken over four hours directly after re-reading my notes for the final time. I decided not to establish a

particular number of significant statements as I did not want to restrict myself at this juncture. Also, I was aware that many of the statements or words I underlined were similar. However, I wondered if, on further examination, each of the apparently comparable statements would point to some shift in emphasis or meaning, and, indeed, this became evident. For example, I had underlined the following phrases and words as being similar: stitched up, tied down, stitched on, sewn on, bound up and embroidered. As I reviewed them I began to appreciate a subtlety of individual meanings. The phrase 'stitched up' appeared to me to refer to a sense of entrapment while 'stitched on' was akin to having something attached to something pre-existing and so on. It was apparent that each of these words and short phrases referred to different aspects of my childhood migration experience.

In my third distillation step I began a process of "formulating meanings" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 75). This work involved intuiting the implicit and explicit gist of the gathered statements with an awareness of the subtle range of interpretations that resided in the phrases I had gleaned from my notes during my second distillation stage. Then, the underlined expressions were arranged into thematic categories which were then categorized by name (Colaizzi, 1978). I spent three consecutive hours one day and another three hours the following day formulating themes.

During the first of these days I cut out the underlined words and phrases and laid them on a table in groups that intuitively had a sense of commonality; for example, the words gaps, space to live, space to fall through, a torn membrane, amniotic sac, the abyss, formless, breath and air formed one category. On the second day I reviewed the categories, moving them around until I felt that the statements were 'correctly' placed. Very often it was difficult to place statements within any group; for example, the word 'chosen' was underlined but did not seem to be related closely to any other term or phrase. However, finally I found a place for this and a number of others which had initially appeared isolated until I sensed that each was in its 'correct' spot.

When I felt comfortable with these groupings I began the fourth task: naming the categories. In particular, I was interested to see if the titles I gave the categories would mirror the layered, ambiguous, ambivalent, and even contradictory points of view which

visual images can potentially portray in a single representation (Day-Scalter, 2003; Siegesmund & Cahnman-Taylor, 2008). In a sense, this process was a creative procedure in which I had to ‘somehow’ compress the richness of each category into a short title. Finally, I identified and named four themes which I felt encompassed the subtleties I had found in the imagery within each category.

The named themes were:

1. The pervasive power of language
2. An unknown self
3. A void
4. The loss of home.

The final, fifth, stage of my distillation process entailed validation of the naming of the categories. Colaizzi (1978) stated that the researcher should provide the study participant, the interviewee, with a copy of the statements and categories for verification. However, this process was not relevant in my research. I engaged in my own process of validation. My review of the categories provided me with an opportunity to change anything that seemed awkward or incorrect. I spent two hours reviewing my decisions and experimented with re-categorizing some statements. However, eventually I returned them to their original positions, feeling that these themes represented an accurate reflection of my interpretation of the statements.

5.6 ASSEMBLING THE DISCOVERED CATEGORIES FOR PRESENTATION

The categories which I distilled through the contemplation of my images heralded the completion of my adaptation of Colaizzi’s (1978) processes. Their presentation was undertaken in accordance within my understanding of art based research in which art rather than a textual analysis is presented as data, that is, “the art itself is allowed to speak for itself” (McNiff, 1998, p. 55). The viewer is expected to respond to a portrayal and, through a personal aesthetic encounter with the imagery, novel aspects of the experience or event may become apparent (Herman, 2005).

To facilitate such engagement with the art I separated the thesis into two volumes. The first volume contains my exegesis while Volume Two presents the images underpinning the four themes I identified. I did not include any written text aside from the names of the themes, the numbering of the images and a description of the materials I had used to create them. In this way I sought to highlight the artful aspects of the study with the hope that the images could be viewed in a way that encourages “a suspension of disbelief” (Woo, 2008, p. 325). In other words, the viewer is free to engage with each image as a reality in which the methodology, conclusions and recommendations of the study do not intrude. Indeed, these aspects become invisible for a time, allowing viewers to immerse themselves in an aesthetic experience (Woo, 2008).

5.7 SUMMARY

This chapter has detailed the processes I employed to conduct my research. I drew from qualitative research approaches, particularly those utilized in research into the experiences of health care recipients. In addition, I constructed a number of strategies from contemporary art and art therapy practice. Overall, the research appeared to proceed in a seemingly organic, naturally evolving, manner as I adapted processes in response to the emergent needs of my inquiry.

In order to create a space for the emergence of my imagery I ‘broke’ with my habitual rituals of art making and old patterns of thought. I engaged in my art work through a process of improvisation that took place when I connected with memories and feelings about my migration. This process was undertaken over three years. I worked in short intensive bursts, each of which lasted for no longer than two weeks. I would then leave the created images in the studio for periods lasting from one week to two months. I ceased making art when I felt a sense of saturation, that is, when I had no more to say about my experience of being a child migrant. Then I engaged in a period of contemplation in which I immersed myself in my images, seeking to gain new insights in my childhood experience of migration without filtering them through a specific theoretical prism.

My final research process entailed distilling the themes that emerged through contemplation. I re-read my notes a number of times, becoming aware of my language, my repetition of certain words and the richness and sketchy nature of my descriptions. I

identified significant statements, arranged them into thematic categories which I named as 'The pervasive power of language', 'An unknown self', 'A void' and 'The loss of home'. These themes do not preclude the identification and naming of other themes by others who proceed through the processes I have outlined. The next two chapters furnish an exploration of the four themes that I identified.

CHAPTER SIX

THE CONSTITUTION OF MY THEMES:

THEMES ONE AND TWO

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In seeking to answer the question ‘What do my art works portray about my experience of being a child migrant?’ I engaged in a specific mode of thematic analysis. I examined the images in relation to my aesthetic experience of being both the artist and viewer with a commitment to viewing each image as an holistic entity (Section 5.4). The images and notes which I compiled during the creation and contemplation of my art work led me to group a number of images. In this chapter I present the ideas that came to mind as I distilled two of four themes: ‘The pervasive power of language’ and ‘An unknown self’.

I stress that my discussion of the themes does not constitute a substitution for engaging with the art work. Rather, it assumes the role of a proxy “for direct experience [with the image]” (Eisner, 2008a, p. 5). Hence, while writing about my images, I maintain that viewing, rather than reading about, them remains the most authentic and potent way of making sense of them.

My response to the research question is presented with the knowledge that it is subjective and unique, and that others will understand the images in numerous ways. According to Eisner (2002), McNiff (1998) and Sullivan (2003), multiple interpretations are inevitable because art is viewed through the prism of each viewer’s inimitable memories, associations and emotions. Thus, no two people can respond to an artwork in quite the same way. As well, I acknowledge that the ideas presented in this chapter were generated at a particular time and place, and may alter over time or when seen in different circumstances. (Section 2.6.1.). My deliberations may also encourage other child migrants to review and examine their own experiences from novel perspectives. This process has been identified by Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) and Igoa (1995), among others, as having potential emotional and

psychological benefits. With these stipulations in mind I present my understanding of what constituted the first identified theme.

6.2 THEME ONE: 'The pervasive power of language'

The title of the theme, 'The pervasive power of language', reflects my understanding of a group of images to be thematically related: that they 'contained' information about elusive aspects of my migration experience. In these images I felt that this information was, in some way, connected to written text. The elements that made up the theme included: first, the link between my identity and my pre-migration Hebrew language; second, the link between my identity and my post-migration acquisition of English; third, the subsequent sense of freedom and space in my life and, paradoxically, of disorientation and instability generated by my 'dual' identity; and, fourth, the role of words in helping me make sense of my migration experience and to feel fully present in my new surroundings. I begin by discussing how images of the first five letters of the Hebrew alphabet led me to consider the connection between Hebrew and my identity.

6.2.1 Connecting My Identity with the Hebrew Language

For me the images of the four Hebrew letters (Images 1-5) represented a significant element of the theme 'The pervasive power of language'. Through my contemplation process (Section 5.3), I intuited that they portrayed how my identity, prior to my migration, was linked to the Hebrew language which, in turn, embodied my Jewish heritage. My realization that language embodied my identity was initially aroused as I reviewed the processes I had used to create the images.

To develop these images I used a printmaking technique which allowed me to create deeply embossed and intensely coloured black letters. This technique was undertaken in a few stages. I began by sprinkling an abrasive metal dust, called carborundum grits, onto copper etching plates on which I had drawn Hebrew letters with liquid adhesive. After the grits mixed and had dried into the adhesive, I inked the plates with black etching ink and passed them through an etching press. As they passed through, the image of each letter was pressed onto rag paper.

The appearance of the letters evoked memories of me reading a book about the history of the Jews that my grandfather had given me when I, with my mother and sister left Israel. I also recalled school lessons in Israel in which I learnt about various Jewish and national festivals. Thus, the method of creating the letters, their appearance and the associations they evoked, led me to consider that they represented a personal intrinsic connection to my Jewish history and culture.

After completing the contemplation process I reviewed the ideas of a number of linguists and historians about language. Their insights enriched my emergent recognition that the Hebrew letters, which I connected to my Jewish heritage, were also linked to my identity prior to my migration. They 'allowed' me to, metaphorically, 'close the circle' of my understanding of my portrayals.

The idea that language plays a part in the formation of a child's identity has been identified in a general way by the linguists Bialystock (2001) and Wood (1981). However, the Hebrew language has been seen as having a particular role in the establishment of a child's identity. For example, Blech (1994), an historian and educator, speculated that the 3,000 year-old connection between the Hebrew language and the Jewish people led to the language becoming part of a Jewish communal memory that links the individual to historical events. This memory is communicated to children as they absorb the Hebrew language. For example, Israeli historian Yitchak Lozowick (Y. Lozowick, personal communication, June 25, 2008) commented to me in a private conversation that Jewish identity is conveyed to children, in part, through the ritual public reading of certain stories in Hebrew throughout each year. As an example he cited the story commemorating the bravery of Queen Esther of Persia in 478 B.C. which is read in synagogues every year. Lozowick (2008) suggested that the words of ancient religious and national stories, such as this story are embedded in Jewish people's understanding of who they are – their sense of self.

In addition to identifying a link between Hebrew, Jewish heritage and, ultimately, my identity, I wondered if the scorched, intensely black, look of the letters was of significance. I found that the ideas of Dan (2006) and Elbogan (2003) led me to connect the letters with the spiritual aspects of my identity. Elbogan (2003), who has explored symbols in Jewish liturgy, noted that, traditionally, the words of the Jewish bible have been compared to fire.

Thus, the scorched appearance of the letters seemed to connect them symbolically to religious sacredness. A connection between Hebrew letters and spirituality was also commented on by Dan (2006), a scholar of the mystical branch of Judaism. He maintained that the physical shape of the Hebrew alphabet holds deep secrets about creation and connections to the divine. He speculated, therefore, that Jews maintain a bond to spirituality simply through viewing and writing the Hebrew language. This belief, he commented, has entered mainstream contemporary Judaism so that certain letters are now commonly used in jewellery as talismans. Seen through this lens the deep embossing of the letters suggested to me that my identity was also attached to spiritual aspects of Judaism.

The notion that language was linked to my sense of self was portrayed in two further images. In them I perceived that the English language, which I learnt after my migration, was implicated in the formation of my identity.

6.2.2 Learning a New Language and Its Impact on My Identity

Two images that I completed after printing the Hebrew letters alerted me to the impact that learning English had had on my sense of self. In one of these images I utilized a facsimile of a page from an exercise book I had retained from my school days in Israel (Image 6). The page consisted of questions and answers about a bible story we had been studying in class. The second image was a facsimile of a story about a bush fire which I had written during my first year in Melbourne (Image 7). Through my contemplation of the two images I came to understand that they portrayed a change in my identity after my migration.

I found that my conclusion, that a change of language can affect identity, had been made by other child migrants and professionals who have worked with them. In her memoir, the child migrant Hoffman (1998) stated that “the [English] language is beginning to invent another me” (p. 121). The findings of Burck (2004), a psychotherapist who worked with migrant children, confirmed and expanded on Hoffman’s (1998) observation. She stated that the language of another country ‘captures’ its spirit in its sound and vocabulary. So, as migrant children learn the language of their new country they absorb its essence in a way that alters their sense of self. Burck (2004) noted, however, that in the process of learning another language, two distinct narratives about who they are may be ‘held’ by the child

migrant. Furthermore, according to Burck (2004) and Igoa (1995), this newly formed identity may not replace the old. They observed that dual identities are often held by child migrants. This stance resonated with me.

The fact that I had created two images that were thematically and visually similar indicated to me that they portrayed this binary: my pre-migration and my post-migration identities. As I viewed them I recalled my experience of having two distinct identities. On one page I could 'see' myself as the girl whose identity was bound with an ancient biblical past while on the other the page, which contained fragments of my English story, I saw myself as a child whose gaze was fixed on the present. One of the ways in which I played out this duality was through the friendships that I sought in my first year post-migration. I recollected craving contact with children who shared and understood my attachment to particular foods, music and rituals associated with religious holy days. However, I also recalled that sometimes I felt suffocated by their similarity to me and I would shun them in favour of what I perceived as carefree Australian children who spoke of other activities, such as football. Another group of images, which I began soon after I had completed these images, portrayed some of the consequences of living with this dual identity.

6.2.3 Feeling Free and Losing a Sense of Being Grounded

I created the second group of images on pieces of card (Images 8-11). Initially, they were covered with variously coloured washes of paint until a richly layered surface built up. I then embellished the surface of the paint with torn paper, tissue and scribbles of black ink, I added random English words which I tore from books discarded by the RMIT library.

When I first contemplated the completed images the appearance of two of the images (Images 8-9) in particular conveyed a sense of space, freedom and of an endless vista. However, as I continued to view them I began to experience feelings of disorientation and dizziness. I observed that the images did not have a focal point of interest and, consequently, my eyes moved incessantly over their surfaces. I began to wonder if the two sensations - of being unconstrained and disorientated - were connected to the images (Images 6-7) in which I portrayed my two co-existing identities (Section 6.2.2).

The idea that having dual identity creates feelings of space and freedom in a child has been described by child migrant and author Elif Shafak (Shafak, Koval & Zijlstra, 2006). In a radio interview she spoke about her realization that as she learnt a new language she developed another sense of self. Furthermore, this additional identity opened her mind to the possibility that her identity was not necessarily bound to prescribed conventions and traditions. In the same way, my images, which reminded me of unbounded space, portrayed a sense of liberty and limitless movement.

However, the disequilibrium that I felt when I viewed the images also ‘taught’ me that there was a price to pay for the space and freedom I had experienced. Through her contact with migrant children, Igoa (1995) witnessed a similar reaction in many of them as they grappled with the formation of an additional identity. Often they felt “unintegrated ... [and] ... split” (Igoa, 1995, p.106) and so did not know how to conduct their lives. In the same way, this group of images portrayed an aimless, unfocused, sensation of drifting. I remembered that as a young migrant I had suffered from vertigo and was unable to get out of bed for one or two days. After viewing these images I wondered if this behaviour was the result of developing and ‘holding’ two identities.

The last group of images which I identified as an element of the theme ‘The pervasive power of language’ was not concerned with identity. Instead, the images represented the instrumental role that words played in assisting me to experience life fully after my migration.

6.2.4 Becoming More Engaged in My New Environment

In this last group of images (Images 12-18) I discerned how my use of words increased my sense of vitality and engagement after my migration. The ‘words’ in these images took the form of dots and dashes. Furthermore, their composition corresponded to the appearance of postcards. Each contained a symbolic ‘message’ and an ‘address’. As I viewed them during the contemplation phase I wondered whether I was their writer or their recipient. Usually that I was both. They appeared, therefore, to portray something about the importance of finding words to describe experiences and events to myself. In addition to

depicting the importance of communicating to myself via language, I understood that these images revealed both the positive and negative nuances of my migration experience.

The images were created on balsa wood rather than the paper and canvas I had used in my other depictions and so felt more permanent and solid. This surface symbolised my emergent belief that my post-migration world was more solid and stable than I had anticipated. I noticed that the colour palette I utilized in these images expanded beyond the black and white, and red and blue dichotomies of my previous depictions. I wondered if this enlarged range of colours portrayed a sense of becoming open to the world around me, to all its hues and shades.

I sensed that my previously limited palette may have indicated a state of exhaustion which had prevented me from 'taking in' my new environment. Such a state has been observed by other child migrants and by professionals who have worked with them. Igoa (1995), for example, commented that the migrant children she taught were often overwhelmed by all that was new in their lives and reacted by retreating psychically from engaging with this world. More evocatively, Hoffman (1998) and Witcomb (2007) mentioned in their memoirs that when they migrated they had felt as if they saw their surroundings through a translucent screen or curtain. To me, Igoa's (1995) comments and the muted vision described by Hoffman (1998) and Witcomb (2007) resonated with the limited colour range that I had employed in my previous images.

In contrast, the bright colours that I used in some of the postcard series led me to recall how words allowed me to re-engage with the world. In particular, I thought about a small diary I had begun close to the first anniversary of my migration. I had recorded various small events relating to the time just prior to leaving Israel and soon after my arrival in Melbourne. The desire to tell oneself a story about one's experience has been noted by Hoffman (1998) and Witcomb (2007). They commented that their ability to describe their experience to themselves was an important milestone in their ability to feel fully alive in their new country. My postcards seemed to signify the same attainment: namely, that words allowed me overcome my possible sense of disengagement from my new surroundings.

In summary, my thematic analysis of the images identified four elements which, together, generated the theme 'The pervasive power of language'. These elements were: first, the impact of my pre-migration Hebrew on my identity; second, the impact of post-migration English on the creation of my sense of self; third, the dilemmas I experienced in having 'dual' identities; and, fourth, the importance of words in my ability to feel fully aware and vital in my new environment. In the next section I explore the composition of my second identified theme 'An unknown self'.

6.3 THEME TWO: 'An unknown self'

The images which I identified as informing Theme Two centred on my sense of being unknown to the people who populated my life at the time of my migration, and on my subsequent struggle to know myself. One thematic element was my experience of inner emptiness.

6.3.1 Sensing an Inner Emptiness

I became aware of the element 'a sense of emptiness' when I reviewed a group of images which contained doll-like figures. In particular, a canvas on which I had tied a small inflated plastic doll led me to reflect on the significance of its hollowness of the doll (Image19). During the contemplation phase of the study (Section 5.4) I also sensed that each of the doll-themed images portrayed different aspects of emptiness. In one image, for example, the face of a doll-like figure had a blank, frozen expression which portrayed to me a sense of emotional desolation (Image 20). In another image no body was present; instead, a floating paper doll dress represented a young girl. The translucent dress portrayed to me the fragility of being 'empty' (Image 21). Finally, the doll-like images were painted in watered down inks or drawn faintly with coloured pencils. This lack of vibrant materials highlighted the quality of emptiness that was 'present' in the images. My reading of these images was further enriched by contemporary artists' understandings of their utilization of doll imagery.

The Australian artist Micaela Giffney (2007), for example, commented that she depicted dolls in her art as a way of playing with perceptions of authenticity. For her, dolls give the appearance of being 'real', but actually represent substitutions for people. Similarly, I sensed that the doll-like figures in my work signified a self that was illusory. Moira Holohan

(2010), another contemporary Australian artist, stated that she was interested in depicting the way dolls are employed as objects of comfort. Her ideas led me to consider that in addition to portraying an inner emptiness, my doll imagery conveyed the unpleasantness of feeling empty and my desire, at that time, for consolation.

I found that an insight into the developmental tasks of children furnished me with another prism through which I could make sense of my art work. Neven (1996), a child psychotherapist, observed that children in middle childhood, as I was at the time of my migration, are involved in building their identity. Doing so enables them to feel complete and whole. Neven (1996) maintained that certain conditions are necessary for children to succeed in this task: the ability to maintain control over their life; to have opportunities to develop affiliations and social skills; and, the ability find links between home and school life.

Her analysis alerted me to aspects of my doll imagery which indicated that I could not achieve these requirements at the time of my migration and that this state led to my sense of inner emptiness. In one image, for example, the significance of the string that attached the inflatable doll to the canvas became evident (Image 19). I sensed that the tied-up doll symbolized my inability to take control of my life. Similarly, the empty environments in which I placed other doll-like figures depicted my detachment from my social environment and from the people in it.

The vacant backgrounds of these art works also alerted me to the second element of the theme, namely loneliness. Furthermore, these images as well as a number of other art works indicated that the loneliness I detected was, in part, connected to my difficulties in creating meaningful links between my home life and school. This connection has been identified by teachers working with child migrants.

6.3.2 Feeling Lonely

My Images indicated to me that my loneliness was the result of experiencing cultural and social dissonance. The educators Igoa (1995) and Kirova (2001) noted that the lack of integration between home and school leads child migrants to keep secrets about aspects of their lives which they feel would not be acceptable to their parents or their school community. A sense of estrangement from both groups ensues, a sense of not being known by anyone, psychologically, emotionally and intellectually. For me at that time, feelings of being alone in the world led to a sense of loneliness.

Various child migrants have expressed similar ideas. Langnado (2007), for example, who immigrated to America as a child, wrote that her mother instructed her “never to reveal that I came from Egypt” (p. 230). She added that her family also dismissed her efforts to integrate American customs into her day-to-day life, seeing her adoption of them as a rejection of her Egyptian past. The effort of trying to keep her two existences separate led to feelings of isolation from the world in which she lived. She also ceased to know herself as there was no-one who could ‘see’ her and reflect her entire ‘self’ back to her. The sense of being so comprehensively unknown led her to experience feelings of intense aloneness and loneliness.

I expressed the aloneness and subsequent loneliness described by Igoa (1995), Kirova (2001) and Langdano (2007) through the materials I chose to incorporate into my imagery. Moreover, my physical engagement with them evoked visceral reactions within me, such as a feeling of heaviness in my chest and a tightening of my stomach. These reactions deepened my understanding of the element of loneliness which I located in my art work. The power of materials to evoke sensation and deepen understanding has been noted by various art therapists. Betensky (1995), for example, commented that: “they [art materials] bring forth emotional arousal and consciousness all at once” (p. 22). This notion was developed by Jones (2005) who indicated that when an artist works with materials which attract them, previously censored or repressed thoughts or memories can arise.

The embroidery materials that I used in creating my images, a needle and thread, were the vehicles by which I expressed loneliness. In using embroidery I was following in the footsteps of contemporary artists, such as Reichel (2000). She noted that in contemporary

art the manner in which the embroidery is created, and its final appearance, have meaning. She noted that embroidery has moved beyond its traditional decorative function.

As I reflected on the way I sewed and on the final appearance of the stitches, I concluded that their appearance portrayed a 'constriction' in my life which led to the loneliness I experienced. This constriction was exemplified in a canvas on which I pasted an illustration of girl alongside some tightly sewn stitches (Image 22). The experience of pulling the thread through the canvas as well as the sight of the taut stitching generated a sensation of being 'stitched up' so that nothing could escape or enter me.

As I looked at the knots and tangles that formed stitching in other images (Images 23-28), I reflected that they portrayed the tangle of ideas and thoughts that had whirled in my mind and which my isolation and loneliness prevented me from sharing. These ideas and thoughts were not incorporated into the fabric of my life during my migration experience in the same way as the loose threads that lay on top of the canvas.

My actions also expressed my loneliness. The feel of the pointy needle and the the sound it made as it pierced the surface of the canvas reminded me of the sharp sensation of my loneliness and how I had perceived it as an attack from a rejecting world. The physical sensations of sewing reminded me that the loneliness I felt also resulted from a lack of kindness in the people I first encountered as a child migrant.

Finally, whilst I did not consciously use embroidery as a way of emphasizing its role as a passive activity, I found that the action of sitting and stitching quietly with a bowed head induced a feeling of quiet docility in me. As I sat and concentrated on moving the needle in and out of various materials I became silent, and unusually withdrawn from my usual worldly activities. This experience led me to consider that embroidery also mirrored my passivity at the time of my migration and that acquiescence had been a major response to my feelings of loneliness.

The materials I incorporated into my images also represented another element of my second theme, namely, the simultaneous desire to be known and to be hidden.

6.2.3 Wishing to be Known and Not Known

The desire of child migrants to seek concealment but, at the same time, wanting to be 'known' has been noted by Igoa (1995). She surmised that while they want to remain hidden, they commonly use art and storytelling in the classroom to metaphorically 'reveal' themselves.

Similarly, in certain of my art works (Images 23-31) I identified a 'dance' between wanting to be known and remaining hidden. So, in one art work (Image 22) I created an image of my self on a discarded X Ray film which depicted some of my internal organs. I prepared its surface by painting the film with white acrylic paint. When it had dried I scratched a drawing of myself as a young girl onto it with a pin, uncovering some areas while revealing parts of my body normally hidden below the skin. Whilst I did not consider the symbolic aspects of creating art on X Rays as I commenced working on this image, I became aware of its significance during the contemplation phase of the study. At that time, it became clear to me that this image pointed to my desire as a child migrant to be 'transparent' while making it very difficult for others to 'see' anything beyond my external appearance.

Another art material which portrayed my conflicting desires regarding my visibility was the written text from a discarded law book that I found at the RMIT library. I created images out of torn headings and sub-headings to do with laws of inheritance, and sticking them onto the left hand corner of a canvas. When I reflected on the dry, legalistic terms that I had chosen I realized that they simultaneously hid and exposed the emotionality of my imagery. The power of the arid words, such as 'Omitting transposing changing and implying' (Image 22), has been noted by the writer Knox (2008). He commented that in literature dry words are often utilized as a powerful portal of the essence of an experience. In the same way, the barren legal phrases I located and incorporated into my images served as a device for pointing to the meaning of an image without revealing my innermost emotions and thoughts.

One of images, for example, featured an image of a young girl in underwear standing alongside a parted 'curtain' created with translucent tissue paper (Image 28). The phrase I attached to the image was 'Alienation without replacement'. While the meaning of the phrase was unclear to me, it had a poetic resonance which I hoped would be appreciated by

the viewer. In this way my title partially fulfilled the convention whereby, according to art critic Joselit (1998), a caption should “explain or interpret an image “(p. 43). So, the labyrinthine meaning of the title reminded me again that this image was, above all, a portrayal of my simultaneous urge to be known and to be concealed.

In summary, three elements constituted my second identified theme ‘An unknown self’. The first was a sense of emptiness engendered by my feeling of being unknown; the second, the loneliness that resulted from being in a state of being unable to reveal myself fully either at home or at school; and, third a tension between wanting to be recognized and to remain hidden.

In the next chapter I explore the remaining two themes, the first being ‘A void’.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE THEMES:

THEMES THREE AND FOUR

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I continue the work of exploring the themes which I distilled through my engagement in the process of contemplation (Section 5.4). I address Themes Three and Four, named 'A void' and 'The loss of home', respectively. I begin my analysis with an examination of the three elements of the third theme. I then discuss the five elements that formed the fourth theme.

7.2 THEME THREE: 'A void'

The third theme, 'A void' was concerned with the ways in which I encountered the physical and social environments of Melbourne as an eight year old migrant. The images that I grouped under this title were created over a two week period and, with one exception, were visually similar.

The one 'atypical' image (Image 32) stimulated me to create several images. It was a small canvas that I had painted black and then partially covered with white tissue paper that had been soaked in diluted polyvinyl acetate, commonly known as PVA glue. I used this liquid adhesive because it becomes transparent as it dries and so would not obscure any part of my image. It also stiffens any material it comes into contact with, so I was able to 'sculpt' the tissue paper by using my fingers to manipulate the damp paper until I was satisfied with its appearance. Once the tissue paper had dried it seemed to resemble a torn membrane through which I could glimpse into a limitless dark space. After viewing this canvas I decided to give it a title from pages of the law text I had utilized to label previous images (Section 6.2.3). The title I settled upon was created from two sub-headings and formed the question 'Really and truly – what is it?' My response to this question formed the images that I

subsequently created (Images, 33-42) and which formed the group of images that I identified with the theme 'A void'.

To construct these images I covered rectangular pieces of cardboard with black paint. Once the surface of the cardboard had dried I scribbled gently on them with a white pastel pencil; the scribbles gradually took on the appearance of a disintegrating membrane or net. A sequence of images created with these two elements, namely a black background and white superimposed drawings, emerged. The simplicity of these images contrasted with my incorporation of multiple visual elements in previous images (for example, Images 8 and 10). I found these representations satisfying to create and I continued to produce them until the impulse to do so faded.

My response to these images during the contemplation phase (Section 4.4) led me to identify them as portrayals of a void, meaning emptiness, nothingness or a vacuum (*The Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 2004). When I reflected on this definition I wondered if my acceptance of it precluded me from identifying any constitutive elements because, at that stage, I understood "emptiness" (*The Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 2004, p. 1577) to mean a featureless space. However, when I surveyed other artists' depictions of a void, I came to re-conceptualise it as a space which contains 'something'. In particular, I was drawn to the discussion of the social theorist Bhabha (2011). In his analysis of Anish Kapoor's 1989 art work titled "Void", Bhabha (2011) remarked that this artist represented "the void" as an entity with dimensions which highlighted its physicality and, thus, its limits. He argued, therefore, that a void could be conceived of as a container in which aspects of life could dwell. This view resonated with me, allowing me to review my understanding of the title of the theme and to consider that it was possible for my images to contain a variety of constituents.

7.2.1 Feeling Empty

One component of the images which subsequently stood out was their blackness. As I reflected on this colour I became aware that I associated it with a vague sensation of mourning, specifically with funerals and the consecrations of graves. As my contemplation deepened I noted that this link was not related to tangible aspects of the experience but to an experience that was amorphous, not tied to any 'thing' or anyone. My reflections about

the nature of my mourning have been noted by the psychoanalyst Leader (2008) in his explication of childhood mourning.

According to Leader (2008), children, unlike adults, generally do not mourn specific objects, people and conditions. They gradually develop the ability to differentiate between what has disappeared from their lives and themselves. In other words, according to Leader (2008), the boundary between a child's body and the outside world develops as they mature psychologically. I suggest then that child migrants would experience mourning in this way.

Leader's (2008) contention stands in contrast to the way mourning by migrants has been described, possibly reflecting a focus on adults' experience of mourning. Akhtar (2011), for example, a psychoanalyst who has written extensively about the experience of migration, noted that mourning among adult migrants is closely connected to losses that are explicitly singled out by them, such as the quality of the physical space in which they once lived or the loss of their social standing. Therefore, Akhtar (2011) argued, while an adult who mourns may be aware of the links between their grief and what is lost, this distinction is not usually possible for a child, mourning is hence experienced in another way. Leader (2008) contended that a child's sense of mourning is more likely to be experienced as feelings of being untethered, disconnected or of falling. He did not specify the age at which a child might have these experiences.

My previous images indicated to me that I had some capacity to identify particular losses, such as my culture and language (Images 1-5). However, the images which I identified as depicting a void also indicated to me that my ability to understand what I was mourning was not fully formed (Images 33-43). They depicted an aspect of my mourning that was not associated with 'something', capturing Leader's (2008) description of childhood mourning, namely, an amorphous emptiness.

As I considered this element in my images I sensed that they also portrayed something about the way I had coped with my mourning. Specifically, the depth of the black background and the fragile floating scribbles reminded me of the many hours I had spent daydreaming after our arrival in Melbourne. I recognized that another element of the theme 'A void' was daydreaming.

7.2.2 Daydreaming

A link between a void and daydreaming was recognized by the French philosopher Bachelard (1969). According to Bachelard (1969), the immensity of space which is inherent in the idea of a void is a “philosophical category of daydreaming” (p. 183). A daydream is not tied to the boundaries of memory or any natural phenomenon. It is ruled by the imagination and is, therefore, limitless and so similar to a void: “the daydream transports the dreamer outside the immediate world to a world that bears the mark of infinity” (Bachelard, 1969, p. 83). Through daydreaming we can transcend the world that we know and lose all sense of dimension (Bachelard, 1969). So, the ideas of high, low, left or right disappear. We are free from the constrictions of our life and exist in a boundless space.

The analysis of daydreams provided me with another lens through which to consider all of the images I identified with the theme ‘A void’. Whilst I could not recall the content of my reveries at the time of my migration to Melbourne, Bachelard’s (1969) analysis prompted me to remember how important it was then for me to retreat from my new life and create a more pleasurable existence.

This function of daydreaming among migrant children was noted by Igoa (1995). She surmised that they spend an inordinate amount of time daydreaming as a way of removing themselves from negative feelings: of isolation, exhaustion, loneliness and confusion. However, she also reported that daydreams help children in a more active and positive way: they have the capacity to provide them with a space in which to imaginatively assimilate and come to terms with their new circumstances. She described a daydream told to her by a student in which they imagined themselves as a bird hatching from an egg in a nest. For Igoa (1995) this daydream indicated both the child’s desire to find a refuge from an unfamiliar environment and their acceptance that they would eventually “hatch” into a new environment. In a similar vein Bachelard (1969) argued, more generally, that daydreams allow for flights from reality while, at the same time, facilitate movement into what he termed the “intimate depth of being” (p. 189).

Whilst my images did not give an indication of the content of my daydreams, the appearance of the imagery suggested these dual functions. On the one hand, the endless space they portrayed depicted my desire to escape, whilst the drawings superimposed on

the black backgrounds suggested the opposite. My drawings, which had the appearance of a torn membrane akin to the membrane surrounding a baby in utero, represented my need to 'gestate' in a confined environment until I was ready to be emotionally 'born' into my new setting.

The images I created also led me to consider another aspect of my functioning within my new environment, namely, the significance of my 'tuning' out of reality, my dissociation.

7.2.3 Feeling Dissociated

During my contemplation of my images I experienced panic and disorientation (Images, 32-42). I also noticed that my eyes sought to 'hold on' to the wispy white drawings which formed part of the images, and that in this way I was able to regain a sense of equilibrium. My reactions helped me to recall and recognize something about my state of mind when I came to Melbourne as a child migrant.

My reading on issues related to the concept of a void suggested that these feelings were similar to those experienced when being in a dissociative state. Kirmayer (2005), a psychiatrist, described this state as one in which a person experiences gaps in awareness, time, memory or identity. His description reminded me of my life during my first year in Melbourne in which distortions in my perception of time and my surroundings were common. For example, when I was aroused from a daydream I was sometimes surprised that the school lunch bell was ringing because I felt that morning recess had just finished. Also, it could take me some time to re-orientate myself to being in a classroom rather than in the place to which I had 'travelled' in my reverie. The feelings which I experienced as a child when I came out of my daydreams were similar to those that were awakened in me as I looked at this series of images. However, according to Kirmayer (2005), dissociation resulting from prolonged reverie is common in childhood and sits within the spectrum of normal childhood experience. But my identification of this state through the feelings I experienced indicated to me that it may have become more frequent, or taken on a heightened significance as a child migrant.

7.2.4 Feeling Unsafe

Furthermore, my reaction to the images which depicted a torn net or membrane indicated my need to find a safety 'net'. For, as I pondered on what the net represented to me, I was drawn to Igoa's (1995) contention that when teachers are sensitive to the needs of migrant children they present them with a safe space from which they can begin to engage with the reality of their existence in a new country. Her comments led me to consider that the net-like images in my drawings also represented the consistency and stability that school life gave me. But, at the same time, the torn appearance of the net indicated gaps which existed in the school's ability to take care of my needs as a migrant.

In summary, I identified four elements which together formed my third theme 'A void'. The element 'Feeling empty' related to my sense of mourning on leaving my home country; 'Daydreaming' captured my escape from difficult feelings, such as loneliness and sorrow; 'Feeling dissociated' and 'Feeling unsafe' related to my desire to escape the strangeness of my life in Melbourne, and the importance of finding a safe place throughout my immigration experience.

In the next section I discuss my final theme, titled 'The loss of home'.

7.3 THEME FOUR: 'The loss of home'

The images which I identified as forming the theme 'The loss of home' were created over a period of two months (Images 43-58). Initially, I saw this group of images as being linked through colour as each contained hues of yellow and blue. Some of the images (Images 43-51) were collages, consisting of abstract geometric shapes cut from materials such as tissue, paper and plaster bandage which I then stuck on painted boards. The remainder (images 52-58) were primarily painted with layers of thick paint, washes and translucent ink.

When I first viewed the collages I felt very strongly that they represented my family home in Israel with its vivid blue exterior and bright yellow interior walls. As my contemplation deepened I noted that the shapes that I had used in constructing the collages alluded to the structure of that home. So I sensed that these images stood for the significance of my Israeli home during my experience of being a child migrant.

Specifically, they portrayed how the loss of this home impacted on my awareness of the world. My images revealed to me that its loss had led me to withdraw from my physical and social environments in Melbourne and to feel internally divided. As a result I reassigned the concept of home to the sky. Finally, I noted that, despite my desire to turn in on myself after the loss of my home in Israel, I maintained a desire to engage with the people and surroundings of Melbourne. I begin with a discussion of how my home in Israel influenced my relationship with the world.

7.3.1 Re-configuring My Relationship with the World

The notion that the tangible presence of our childhood home influences the way we conceive of the world has been commented upon by philosophers and child migrants. According to Foucault (1986), a French philosopher, the home in which we live is not an homogenous, neutral space: “On the contrary ... [it is a space] ... imbued with quantities and [is] perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic [sic] as well“(p. 23). In other words, Foucault argued that a home is not a generic zone but a specific construction whose peculiarities intimately effect our imagination and dreams.

Bachelard (1969), another French philosopher, noted that our first home has a specific influence on our emotions and intellect. This observation was particularly relevant to my experience as I had lived my life, prior to my migration, in the home I depicted in my art. He maintained that the home into which a baby is brought represents their first experience of the universe, somewhat akin to the womb in which we develop. Therefore he argued, a home’s design and shape, as much as the life that goes on within it, provide a child with a template for understanding the environments they occupy throughout their lives.

A similar idea was expressed by Lagnado (2007) in her description of the thoughts she had had when she visited her childhood home as an adult. She recognized that the building had been as much a psychological space as a physical structure: “Malaka Nazli [the name of the apartment block] hadn’t simply been a place, I realized, but a state of mind” (Lagnado, 2007, p. 332). In the same way, I intuited that the images which depicted my home portrayed the way I ‘saw’ the world then as much as offering abstracted depictions of the surfaces and colours of my Israeli home.

My creation indicated to me that leaving my home had multiple consequences. In particular, the content and the techniques I used to create the collages signalled that this departure had led me to close in on myself.

7.3.2 Closing in on Myself

My understanding of the collages as capturing my sense of withdrawal was initially informed by Hoffman's (1999) assertion that the abruptness of leaving home can lead child migrants to retreat into themselves. Hoffman (1999) noted that these children are often removed from their homes with little explanation or preparation because the adults who care for them are often preoccupied with the practical affairs of migration. Furthermore, she argued that the effect of the abrupt loss of the stabilizing structure of home leads to a general emotional withdrawal in the child. She viewed this change as an attempt at self-defence and self-preservation. A similar reaction was noted by Lagnado (2007) in her memoir of her family's migration experience. She described how her young brother identified the loss of the "particular angle the sun fell in the room [of their home in Egypt] facing the alleyway [sic]" (Lagnado, 2007, p. 219) as the central focus of his migration experience, its absence leading to his emotional withdrawal from his family and community.

In a similar vein, I saw the content of my collages as capturing the closing in, or retreat, of myself as I experienced the loss of my home in Israel. In particular, I noted that none of the larger shapes, which signified its walls, depicted any openings and that I had omitted any representations of windows and doors. I became aware that these images were reminiscent of a bunker, a consciousness which evoked a sense of claustrophobia. In some of the images the inclusion of plaster bandages increased my sense of being firmly locked in (Images 47-52). Other aspects of the content and composition of the collages led me to consider another consequence of leaving my home, namely, a tendency to view life in terms of division.

7.3.3 Internalizing Division as a Feature of Life

The aspect of division in my images became apparent to me when I focused on the details of their composition. The shapes of the fabrics and paper I had cut and adhered to boards were uniformly straight and clean edged. These qualities made me recall the action and

noise of scissors or blades slicing through the paper or fabric. I also noted that the edges of these pieces overlapped or abutted each other awkwardly. As well, none of the shapes were placed in a perfectly vertically position. Consequently, the structures seemed to be in danger of falling apart. The blue and yellow colours which resided on the opposite sides of the colour-wheel added to this impression of division.

Other child migrants have described feelings of being divided. Hoffman (1999), for example, defined the effect of losing her home in Poland when she migrated as having been placed by someone “on the other side” (p. 45). Similarly, Lagnado (2007) mentioned that leaving her home in Cairo marked a ‘before migration’ and ‘after migration’ division in the way she thought about her life.

In the paintings that followed my creation of the collages, other aspects of the theme became apparent. The change to painted imagery was heralded by the creation of an image which utilized elements of both collage and painting (Image 52). It consisted of a childlike pen and ink drawing of a house, surrounded by trees, which I glued onto a small canvas covered in a wash of blue ink. The little house seemed to float in the sky. It was this ‘floatiness’ which led me to put aside the inflexibility of the materials I had used in the collages and to begin working with the less rigid character of paint. With this change of materials another aspect of the theme emerged, namely my appropriation of an in-between space as home.

7.3.4 Finding a Home In-between

The paintings communicated to me that leaving my home in Israel created a vacuum within me and a desire to connect to a new ‘home’ (Images 52-58). Additionally, they indicated that I substituted the sky for ‘home’.

While I continued to use various shades of the colours blue and yellow in the paintings, and the sight of them evoked strong associations with my home in Israel. However, the formlessness of the images also reminded me of the sky (Images 53-58). I particularly noted that the paintings had no sense of a horizon or of perspective: the ‘sky’ appeared as an endless, featureless space. When I reflected on this feature I became aware of feeling untethered and uncontained and came to appreciate that the allusion to sky, in conjunction

with my inclusion of the colours I associated with home, meant that my use of landscape communicated another aspect of the loss of my home: that of appropriating the sky as my home.

The notion that landscapes can symbolically depict aspects of the migrant experience has been articulated by Tucker (2007), an artist with an interest in migration and art making. Specifically, she suggested that the inclusion of images of skies in migrants' art often alludes to their experiences of departure, journey and arrival. However, this stance did not resonate with me.

In my paintings I intuited that the image of the sky related to my inner private world - not to the unfolding process of my relocation to Melbourne. For me, the sky seemed to signify my awareness of being 'neither here nor there' after I had left my home. Furthermore, the yellow and blue which I used to portray the sky led me to consider that, consequently, I adopted a sense of being 'neither here nor there' as itself a new 'home'. This view was strengthened when I reflected on a poem I had written while I created these paintings. In it I described my longing, during our aeroplane trip to Melbourne, to float out of the window and live in the clouds. So, I sensed that this desire, in conjunction with the paintings, revealed a shift in my perception of 'home'. Home was no longer connected to a particular place: it was located in an in-between space. Such an interpretation of home has been noted by other child migrants

According to Igoa (1995) and Hoffman (1999), this perception leads the child to have a sense of being an outsider in their country of origin and in their new country. Hoffman (1999) stated that this sense of "outsiderness" (p. 45) can lead to a rupture between the way child migrants come to view themselves and their world and the geographical space they occupy: "a detachment of knowledge, action, information and identity from specific space and physical source" (p. 44) can occur. Such a position, she argued, can free a child migrant so that they can absorb new values and ideas without these being filtered and altered by the structures in which they were located within their childhood home. However, my observation of my paintings suggested to me that the wispy yellow and blue fragments of the sky indicated that the ghost of my Israeli home was ever present. For this reason,

Hoffman's (1999) notion of "outsiderness" (p. 45) seemed to represent an idealized position which I had never achieved.

My realization that yellow was less prominent than blue in my images led me to reflect further on the significance of these colours. My deliberations were informed by the colour theories put forward by Wassily Kandinsky (1977), an artist and pioneer of twentieth century investigations into the meaning of colour (Gage, 1999). Kandinsky's notions led me to appreciate that the preponderance of blue in my paintings depicted my inclination to withdraw from the outside environment, a finding I that I had already identified (Section 7.2.2). However, his discussion on the colour yellow enabled me to recognize that my desire to close in on myself was not clear cut.

7.3.5 Struggling to Open Up to the World around Me

The colour theories of Kandinsky (1977) led me to recognize that I had been engaged in an inner conflict in which part of me sought to engage with, and be open to, my new environment while, at the same time, I sought to withdraw within myself. Kandinsky (1977) argued that each colour has an inner meaning that is innately understood by humans: blue is associated in our minds with a turning away from others "like a snail retreating into its shell" (p. 37) while yellow indicates a movement towards others.

When I considered the colours in my paintings from Kandinsky's (1977) perspective, I came to appreciate that I must have struggled, however faintly, to break out of my tendency to close in on myself. In their memoirs, Hoffman (1998), Lagnado (2007) and Ulman (2007) described similar struggles. Earlier, Igoa (1995) had commented on this conflict. She described a cartoon strip drawn by a child in which he drew a little bird struggling to emerge from a box so that it could join in the games of the other birds. For Igoa (1995), this story represented the boy's hope of ending his self-imposed isolation and his desire to engage with a friendly world. The inclusion of yellow in all my representations indicated to me that part of me had also sought to immerse myself in my new surroundings in Melbourne.

In summary, the theme 'The loss of home' consisted of five elements. The first element, 'Re-configuring my relationship with the world', related to how leaving my home in Israel led me to re-view my understanding of the world. The second element, 'Closing in on my self',

related to my subsequent adoption of an introspective stance as a form of protection from a sense of emotional instability. The third element, 'Internalizing division as a feature of life', related to my tendency to internalize division as a paradigm for understanding the world. The fourth element, 'Finding a home in-between', centred on my adoption of an in-between space as my new home. The final element, 'Struggling to open up to the world around me', addressed my observation that, despite my tendency to withdraw, I struggled to re-engage with my new surroundings in Melbourne.

In the chapter that follows I draw this study together. I summarise its findings, present my concluding thoughts and my recommendations for future research and practice.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In this study I explored the question ‘What do my art works portray about my experience of being a child migrant?’ I engaged in processes that informed my creation and contemplation of my art, as well as the subsequent identification of themes which gave me insight into this experience.

My study was also undertaken with the expectation that the art based findings would lead to what Barone (2008) described as a “foray into a realm of possibilities” (p. 30). In other words, I anticipated that the themes I identified and explored would provoke readers’ imagination, arouse empathic responses and curiosity, and stimulate conversations about the experience of child migration. My study sought, therefore, to fill a gap in extant literature on child migrants (Section 2.5) by offering a unique a body of work which portrayed an experience of child migration. I believe that it has achieved this aim.

I developed and adapted some current qualitative research processes and art therapy practices to ‘fit’ the requirements of my study. I created 58 images over a three year period (Table 5.1) in a studio in my home. Recommendations regarding the way original imagery could be created came primarily from ideas proposed by art therapists and philosophers who described processes that are not immediately accessible to the conscious mind (Section 5.3.1). My contemplations of the resulting imagery were also informed by art therapy practitioners. In addition, the concept of uncovering themes, drawn from phenomenological research, provided me with a framework for identifying and examining the themes (Section 5.5.1). Finally, work presented by art based researchers and authors who have put forward visual records of life events furnished me with ideas that guided my presentation of the images (Section 5.6).

The findings comprised four themes, namely, 'The pervasive power of language', 'An unknown self', 'An abyss' and 'The loss of home'. I investigated the themes in the order in which I identified them. I came to understand that my migration experience was replete with contradictions, was paradoxical and layered. In essence, my art works portrayed a sense of disjunction. In the next section I present a summary of the findings which led me to this conclusion.

8.2 OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

The first identified theme, 'The pervasive power of language', relates to my loss of contact with the Hebrew language and, consequently, my loss of a crucial aspect of my identity with its inextricable link to Jewish and Israeli history. However, this loss was counterbalanced with a gain: my acquisition of English. Through mastering a new language new ways of viewing the world became apparent as aspects of Australian culture were implicitly and explicitly accessible to, and accessed by, me.

I identified inner emptiness, loneliness, and estrangement as elements of the second theme, 'An unknown self'. These states resulted from my sense of being unknown to others and to myself. The images also revealed that I sought to alleviate these states by simultaneously seeking to be 'seen' by others and to remain 'hidden'.

The elements which comprised my third identified theme, 'The void', centred on my childhood experience of mourning for the life I had left in Israel. These included daydreaming and dissociating which enabled me to escape from the emptiness of my mourning. However, these were solitary preoccupations and hindered my interactions with the people now in my life. Paradoxically, as a way of escaping the painful sensations that mourning aroused in me, I was driven to engage in 'school life'. Here the presence of other pupils and predictable schedules provided me with respite from these difficult feelings.

The fourth, theme, 'The loss of home', contained further paradoxes. The loss of my home in Israel led me to close in on myself and to internalize the duality of my life, pre- and post-migration, as a feature of life in general. It also resulted in me creating a particular coping mechanism: I developed a way of attributing a sense of 'home' to an in-between space,

namely the sky. In doing so I established a psychological conception of home which was not space-bound and was, therefore, less vulnerable to any future physical upheavals.

Thus, the exploration of my identified themes led me to posit that my experience of being a child migrant had been one of disjunction; that is, I found that paradox and contradictions were integral parts of the experience. In the next section I explore the ramifications of the thematic findings.

8.3 IMPLICATIONS OF MY FINDINGS

I suggest that, potentially, my findings are relevant to three domains: myself, parents and their children, and those working with child migrants. They contribute to literature that seeks to understand how children experience their migration by providing an art based investigation of how I encountered my own migration. To my knowledge no other autobiographical art based study of childhood migration has been undertaken (Section 2.5).

First, my findings have had ramifications for my present-day life, specifically bringing into focus a significant part of my past and allowing me to think about my migration through 'my' eyes. In doing so, I have come to identify and own my experience. Second, they may constitute a resource for parents of child migrants, enhancing communication between them and their children. Finally, the findings may assist educators and other professionals who work with child migrants to re-evaluate and develop their approaches to teaching and the provision of psychological help. I begin with a discussion of the ramifications of the findings for my life.

8.3.1 Owning My Experience of Migration

The study revealed aspects of my migration experience which, until then, I had not known. In doing so, my findings led me to feel, for the first time, that I 'owned' my migration journey, that elements were mine alone. Through the process of creating my images and identifying themes in them, previously undefined feelings and thoughts about my migration came into focus and so could be examined. In this way, I had the opportunity to conceptualise my experience from my perspective rather than through my parents' impressions of the migration 'event'. For example, my mother had always told me that she

was sure that learning English had been easy for me; however, my findings indicated that I had found the process of learning English difficult (Section 6.2).

8.3.2 Dealing with the Intricacies of My Migration

I came to understand that I was able to recognize, and deal with, complex aspects of my experience because they were embedded in imagery. The images became comforting ‘companions’ as they were my creations and so the experiences they portrayed were couched in deeply internalized iconography. Hence, for the first time, I was able to bear thinking about confusing and difficult aspects of my migration. I came to sense that my appropriation of the images as ‘companions’ was connected to the notion of the transitional object, a term coined by child psychoanalyst Winnicott (2005).

According to Winnicott (2005), transitional objects are material objects to which infants attribute special value so that they can be used as a defence against anxiety. For me, the adoption of the art work as a companion or transitional object took place during the creative process. At this stage my discordant or conflicting experiences were re-shaped into comforting aesthetic compositions which facilitated my capacity to look at, and think about, the portrayed experience.

My sense that visual art was implicated in my ability to recognize and countenance aspects of my migration experience was also, paradoxically, related to Schaverien’s (1999) concept of the “scapegoat” (p. 37). This concept positions the image as an ‘outsider’, not as a friendly companion. Schaverien (1999) noted that in her experience as an art therapist, clients sometimes transferred difficult emotions into their imagery so that they could be relieved of them. Similarly, I sensed that by externalizing confusing aspects of my migration experience I gained enough distance from them to be able to contemplate them.

In addition to the impact on me of engaging in the study, I came to see that the findings could have ramifications for others.

8.3.3 The Relevance of My Findings to Others

As I reflected on the singular nature of my findings I came to see very clearly that their core meanings had wider implications. Eisner (2008b) captured this notion when he stated that

apart from portrayals of personal experience have “a literary ... generalizability [which] teaches lessons in ways that go beyond the particular” (p. 21). In other words, he argued that, like works of literature, visual art can reveal universal aspects of life.

Whilst not embracing the notion of universal applicability, I suggest that my subjective findings may remind viewers of events in their childhood that relate to the themes I identified. For example, memories of changing schools may arise for some viewers when they engage with my art and the written text. In this way, the study may stimulate empathic responses and ideas and so lead to new understandings of child migrants based. In particular, the findings could enhance relationships between child migrants and their parents.

8.3.3.1 Strengthening ties between child migrants and their parents

The idea that child migration can lead to conflict between children and their parents has been documented in professional and anecdotal literature (Section 2.5). My art work and findings may entice parents of migrant children to look beyond their adult concerns and focus on ‘seeing’ the migrant experience through their children’s eyes. In particular, the findings may alert parents to differences between their own migration experience and that of their children. In this way communication between parents and children may be enhanced. The findings may also stimulate teachers to develop new educational practices.

8.3.3.2 Approaching the education of child migrants in nuanced ways

The tacit knowledge which teachers may absorb through viewing my art work may alter their attitude towards working with migrant students. Teaching practices have recently moved from focusing primarily on individual tasks, such as teaching literacy skills, to examining ways in which communication between children and teachers can be enhanced. Paying attention to the children’s home language (Garcia, 2003) and responding to the cultures of the migrant student (Okagaki & Diamond, 2003) have been understood as important to the teaching process. Additionally, forging a caring classroom atmosphere has been advocated by Igoa (1995).

The findings of my study have the potential to enhance such a sensitive and diverse approach to teaching by suggesting that teachers tailor their practices to take into account

the elements implicated in a child migrant's ability to learn. For example, my findings reveal that my connection to learning English was intrinsically connected to my sadness regarding the loss of my culture of origin (Section 6.2). It may have assisted me if my teachers had considered this association by teaching me to read from books with topics that were less culturally alienating.

In addition, my findings may assist psychologists, social workers to develop the ways in which they work therapeutically with child migrants.

8.3.3.3 Constructing new therapeutic paradigms

By utilizing the philosophical approaches and research processes I have outlined (Chapters Four and Five), social workers and mental health professionals may identify previously 'unknown' connections between their lives and those of their child migrant clients. Through such recognition they may choose to augment the therapeutic paradigms they employ in their work with child migrants so that cultural and religious differences may be identified and addressed. In addition, the hierarchical structure of a working alliance may be ameliorated in a safe and controlled way, thus encouraging a therapeutic relationship that assists migrant children feel a sense of connectedness with others.

If, for example, social workers and mental health professionals, approach art created by children about their migration as a form of communication, not as a diagnostic or analytic tool (Section 4.5), a different way of approaching difficulties could arise. By contemplating the child's imagery in this way, a professional would be implicated in entering the child's reality rather than expecting the child to conform to what the adult 'sees' as 'a problem'. In this way a relational collaborative approach, in which the child and the professional are co-investigators, can arise. For migrant children who feel that their migration represents a loss of control (Section 2.2.3) such a collaborative approach may be therapeutic in itself.

In addition, the sensations that arise when viewing art may facilitate the development of what art therapist Moon (2002) termed an "aesthetic relational" (p. 131) connection between professionals and their patient or students. Moon (2002) noted that when the artist can sense that the viewer has engaged with feeling to their image, a contained and appropriate emotional closeness can arise. For child migrants who may be struggling to

regain a sense of stability and safety (Section 2.5) such a connection can, I believe, be most helpful. In particular, it may assist them to overcome feelings of disengagement and loneliness (Section 2.2.3). Indeed, gaining such a sense of interconnectedness would facilitate their willingness and ability to collaborate with a professional and so, potentially, to overcome perceived difficulties.

In the remainder of this chapter I review my research processes and discuss my recommendations for future research.

8.4 REFLECTIONS ON MY RESEARCH PROCESSES

In reflecting on my research processes I believe that I achieved my intention to be innovative in my field of art therapy, and to generate practices which could serve parents, teachers and other professionals who are involved in the welfare of child migrants. In particular, I came to appreciate that the processes I developed constitute an example of how art based research could be conducted. My reflections also identified an on-going difficulty and heralded insight into some negative dimensions of my research processes. In particular, the difficulty of responding adequately to the large number of images I created.

8.4.1 Positive Aspects of the Research Processes

The positive aspects of my research processes relate to the congruence between the philosophical underpinnings of the study and the processes I developed. Another positive feature was my construction of an art based research model.

Prior to undertaking this study I came located numerous articles describing the virtue and philosophy of art based research (Section 4.1). However, I was unable to locate a comprehensive outline of processes that could be employed by art based researchers. Additionally, while I found interesting descriptions of the outcomes of art based studies they were not accompanied with a 'technical' description of the research practices and the principles of the researcher. Consequently, I had no 'skeleton' on which I could build my practices. As a result I had no comparative framework and I often wondered if the practices I was assembling would ultimately 'work'.

The processes that I did develop emerged through a synthesis of the philosophical ideas that underpinned the study. For example, aspects of my procedure of creation were drawn from practices described by McNiff (1998) and Thomson (1997) (Section 5.3). These provided me with concrete ways of fostering an engagement with the aesthetic experience (Section 4.3.1). The contemplative processes provided me with ways of viewing and describing the images that did not 'break' them into discrete parts (Section 4.5).

Once I had proceeded through the complex and intensive work of identifying these appropriate processes I was able to complete my study with a sense of inner integrity. In other words, I felt that I remained true to my vision of art based research. Furthermore, the congruency between my philosophical concepts and research processes provided me a seamless progression from the creation of the art work to my subsequent identification of themes. The consistency of my processes made 'doing' the study relatively comfortable. Furthermore, I believe that the processes that I constructed constitute a model which future art based researchers could find useful.

8.4.2 Problematic Aspects

As I reviewed the processes I had adopted I became aware of a disjunction between my perception of the content of my images and my ability to record their content in words. My inability to record their content prevailed and the question of how to do so remains unresolved.

In particular, I noted a significant difference between the appearance of the imagery and the order in which I captured the content in my writing. So, while I wrote about the themes in the order in which I 'discovered' them in the images, I was aware that my classification was a construction of my intellect. My desire to present my work in a linear, coherent and 'normal' way did not always mirror the process of creation. Arnheim (1970), a psychologist who has researched visual perception, commented on this issue. He noted that while the ordering and recording of discovered themes are necessary if we want to think about what is present in an image, the written account represents only an approximation of the portrayal. In addition, he warned that, ultimately, we should defer to the image to gain the genuine, profound view of an event or experience (Arnheim, 1970).

But while I had pre-empted this issue (Section 6.1), I had not anticipated that I would feel so strongly about the actual discrepancy I noted between the holistic nature of my images and my written descriptions of them. In particular, I wondered if the way I ordered the themes implied that my experience had progressed smoothly; that, for example, the re configuring of my relationship to the world (Section 7.2.1) directly prompted my closing in on myself (Section 7.2.2). However, the creation of the images did not arrive through a linear process. Instead, I found myself returning to some motifs many times, adding and subtracting elements to other images over the entire three year art making period. Thus, the experience of my migration may have been more chaotic, messy or fragmented than my written findings would indicate.

In addition to this conceptual problem, some practical difficulties emerged. These stemmed from my unwillingness to limit the number of images which I would create for the study. In fact, at the commencement of the study I feared that I would not be able to create a sufficient number of images. However, to my surprise, I found that my ability and desire to create images about my migration were boundless. Indeed, as I had made no provision for a process of selection and elimination of images, I found that the actual contemplation of the many images that I had created to be quite daunting. I now sense that as I had 58 images to contemplate I may have overlooked many elements. Indeed, I anticipate that others who engage with the art work may come across unexamined aspects of the imagery which could foment new and unexpected insights.

8.5 RECOMEMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Having arrived at the end of my study my curiosity about child migration experience is not sated. Neither is my curiosity about the ways in which the arts could be used to expand our understanding of human experience. The recommendations I have set out below reflect these interests. In addition, I suggest that other research strategies have a place in exploring the changes implicated in my findings (Section 8.3).

First, opportunities for utilizing visual art in research about child migration could be broadened. In particular, the wordless aspect of creating art could be exploited as a suitable way of learning more about the concerns of non-English speaking child migrants. It may be useful, for example, to construct an art based study which investigates aspects of the

experience which preoccupy recently arrived child migrants and compare these to themes evident in the art of adult child migrants. Such a study may divulge, if any features of the migration experience are transitory, if any are still present in adulthood or if any elements have been compounded or altered over time. The findings could enliven debate around the effect of migration on children, particularly whether child migration is an evolving, ongoing experience or a singular event.

Second, whilst I employed the visual arts to explore my migration experience I would advocate that other art based modalities, such as music and movement, be employed to explore child migration. The specific qualities of visual art, such as texture and colour, facilitated the exploration of aspects of my experience (Chapters Six and Seven). The features of other modalities may elicit further dimensions of the experience which the qualities of visual art cannot penetrate. For example, the use of movement may reveal aspects that are stored as a body memory, a phenomenon which the neuroscientist Damasio (2000) has identified.

Third, research into the art work of recently arrived child migrants who are siblings could identify ways in which birth order may shape the experience of migration. This area of child migration has been scantily explored in autobiographies and research. In their autobiographies Hoffman (1998) and Lagnado (2007) discussed how their respective familial position impacted on their exposure to problems that arose for the family, such as their parents' unemployment and social isolation. Young and Ansell (2003) undertook qualitative research which revealed that in some African migrant communities older children were expected to care for younger siblings. Yaqub (2007), collected statistical data which indicated that older children in migrant families around the world had poorer academic outcomes than their younger siblings. The use of art in researching this area of child migration could potentially reveal the subjective concerns of siblings and thus encourage teachers, other professionals and parents to be alert to the importance of the position of the child within the family.

Fourth, it may be interesting to conduct art based study in which art created by child migrants is responded to visually by a researcher. The researcher would sit alongside the child and create an image which constitutes a 'reply' to the child's art, seeking to

understand if the practice of responding visually to a child migrant's art can assist them to feel that they are 'seen' and 'heard'. Such a study could highlight a possible nexus between research and art therapy.

The connection between the two disciplines, research and art, has already been explored by other arts based researchers. Huss and Cwikel (1995) researched the lives of Bedouin women by examining the art work they created during art studio sessions. Over the research period they became aware that this process encouraged the women to actively pursue other interests. In a study undertaken by Blumenthal Jones (2005), Navajo students in an American high school were asked to write poetry and stories so that educators could create a school curriculum which was relevant to them. The students indicated that through their creative writing they were able to re-assess difficult aspects of their lives. Similarly, the art based research I conducted could assist children to feel understood as well increasing teachers understanding of art as a mode of communication with migrant children.

Finally, the possibilities suggested by my findings (Section 8.3) can be formulated as areas for future research using other research conventions; for example, the question 'What is the lived experience of being a child migrant?' could be the subject of a study and so capturing data from groups of children of similar age. This question could also generate more information about the experience of child migrants from different countries or socio-economic backgrounds. If an education focus was adopted the question 'What is the lived experience of being the teacher of migrant children?' may provide teachers with practical data that would assist them to re-evaluate and enlarge the pool of strategies they utilize to educate child migrants.

8.6 FINAL COMMENTS

As I stated in Chapter One, this study originated in my wish to turn the pages of a hand made book I created whose leaves were bound with wire. I felt that this impenetrable book represented aspects of my migration that I found difficult to explore. I undertook the task of metaphorically loosening the wire with trepidation as I felt that that my findings might undermine my loyalty to my parents' version of my experience. However, by committing to this study I have strengthened my sense of individuality and have found myself able to hold

my parents' accounts comfortably alongside my own. I would encourage other child migrants to embark on a similar endeavour.

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DISJUNCTIONS AND CONTRADICTIONS: AN EXPLORATION OF MY CHILDHOOD MIGRATION EXPERIENCE THROUGH VISUAL ART.

VOLUME TWO

Carmella Grynberg

Master of Creative Arts therapy

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy

School of Education

RMIT University

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Image 2

180 x 130 mm.

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Image 3

180 x 130 mm.

Carborundum print on rag paper, embroidered gauze and shellac on canvas.

Image 4

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Image 5

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Image 7

295 x 200 mm.

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100 x140 mm.

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Image 14

100 x140 mm.

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100 x 140 mm.

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Image 29

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Image 36

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Image 37

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Image 38

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Image 41

125 x135 mm.

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Image 42

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80 x 105 mm.

Drypoint and ink on rag paper.

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Image 44

110 x 110 mm.

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Image 49

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Plaster bandage, hand coloured paper, acrylic paint and shellac on cardboard.

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Plaster bandage, hand coloured paper, acrylic paint and shellac on cardboard.

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Image 52

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Image 53

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Image 55

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Image 56

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Tissue paper, acrylic, ink, coloured pencil, embroidery thread and shellac on cardboard.

Image 57

180 x 250 mm

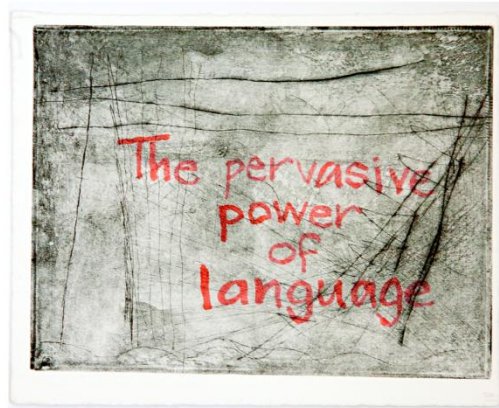
Plaster bandage, a feather, facsimile of a photograph, acrylic paint, thread, book fragments, ink and shellac on cardboard.

Image 58

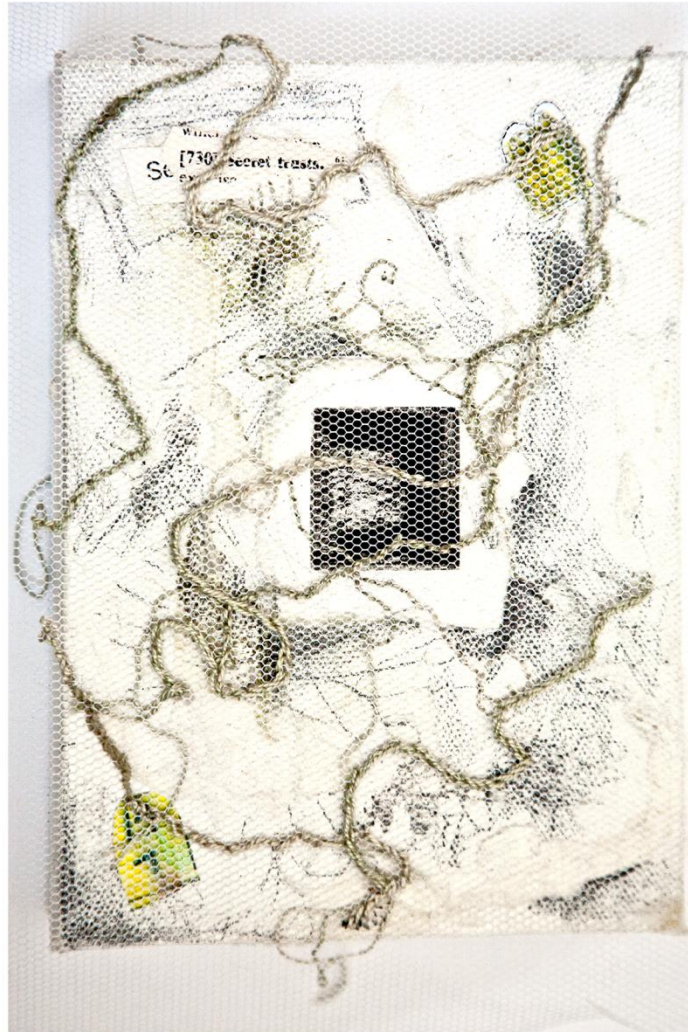
20 x 280 mm.

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THEME 1



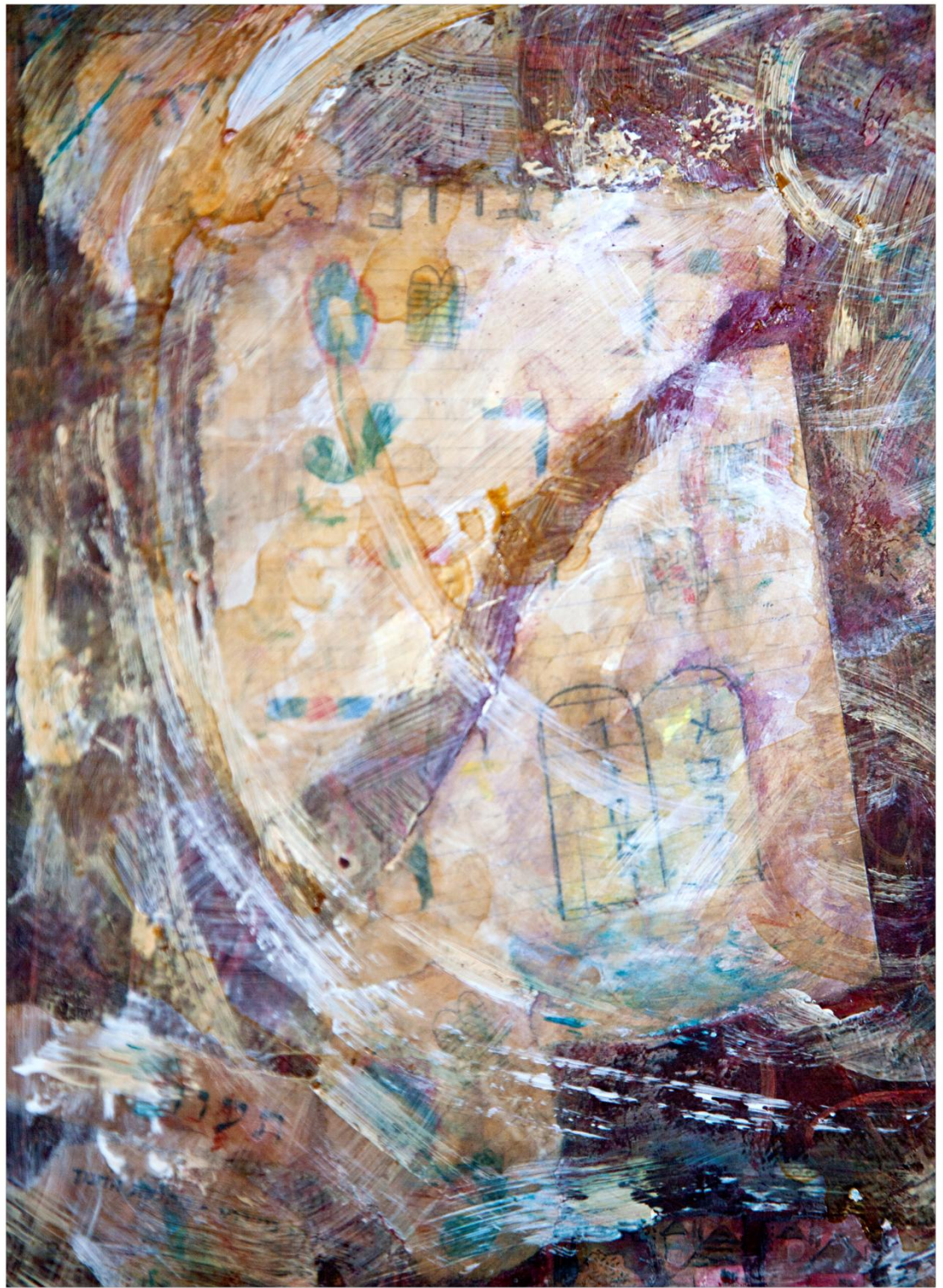








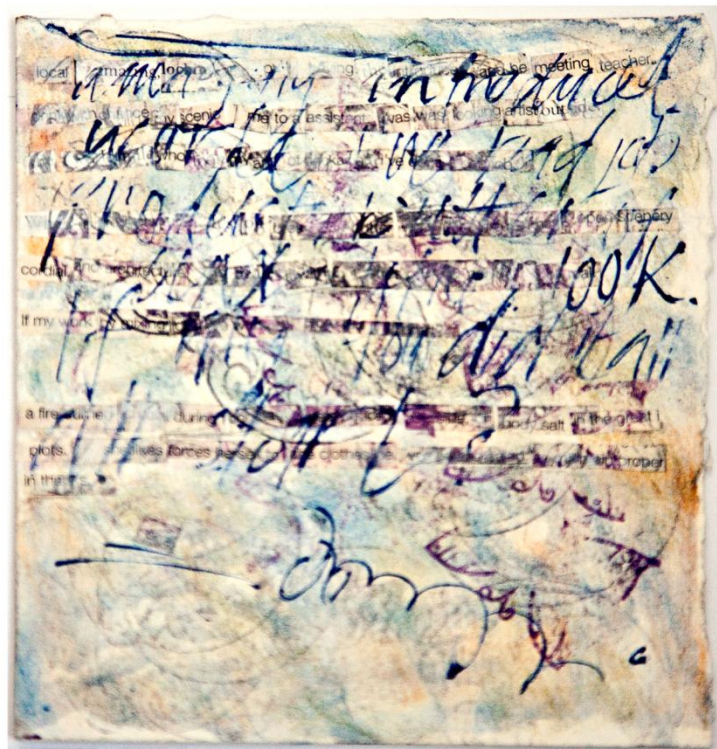














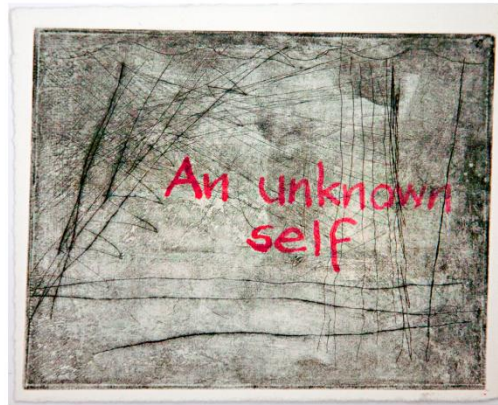








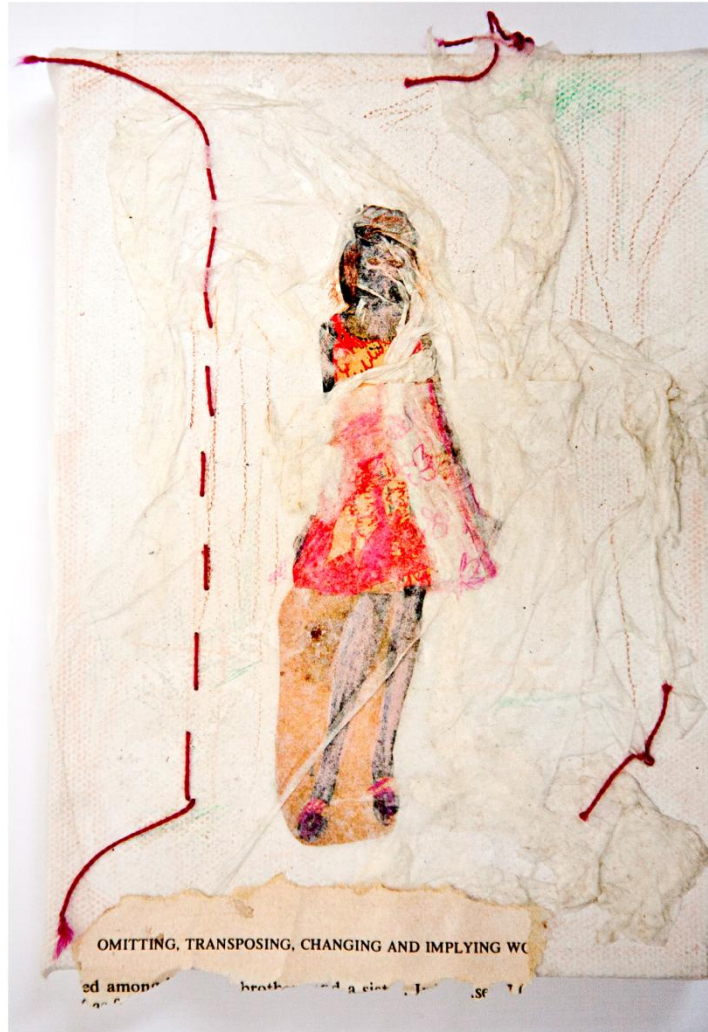
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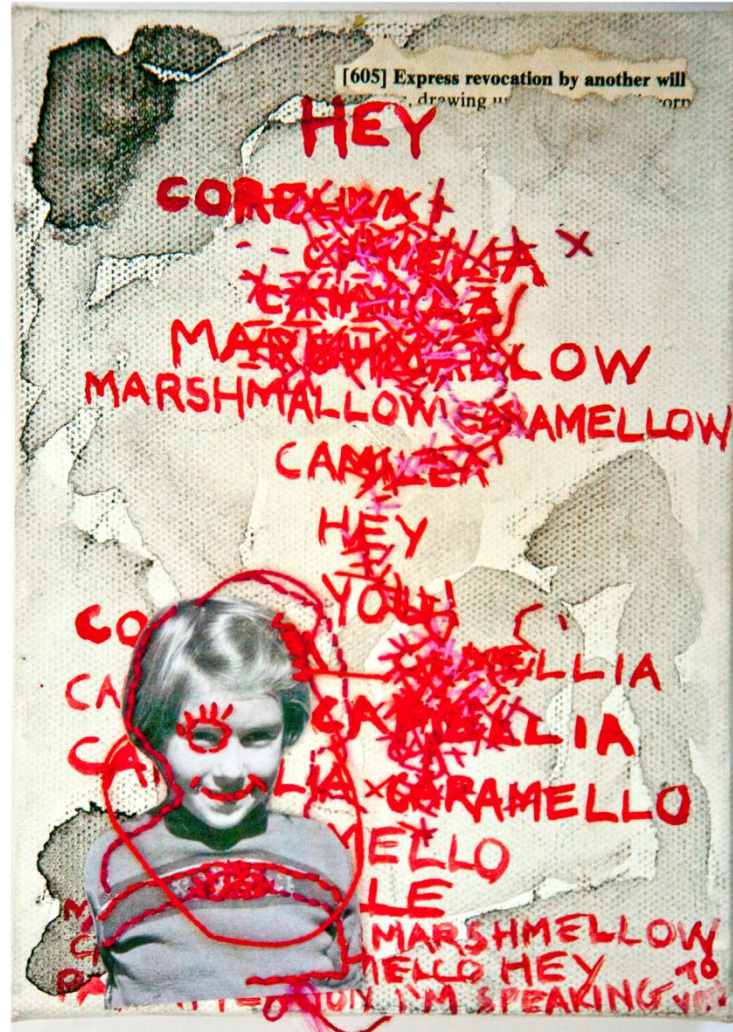








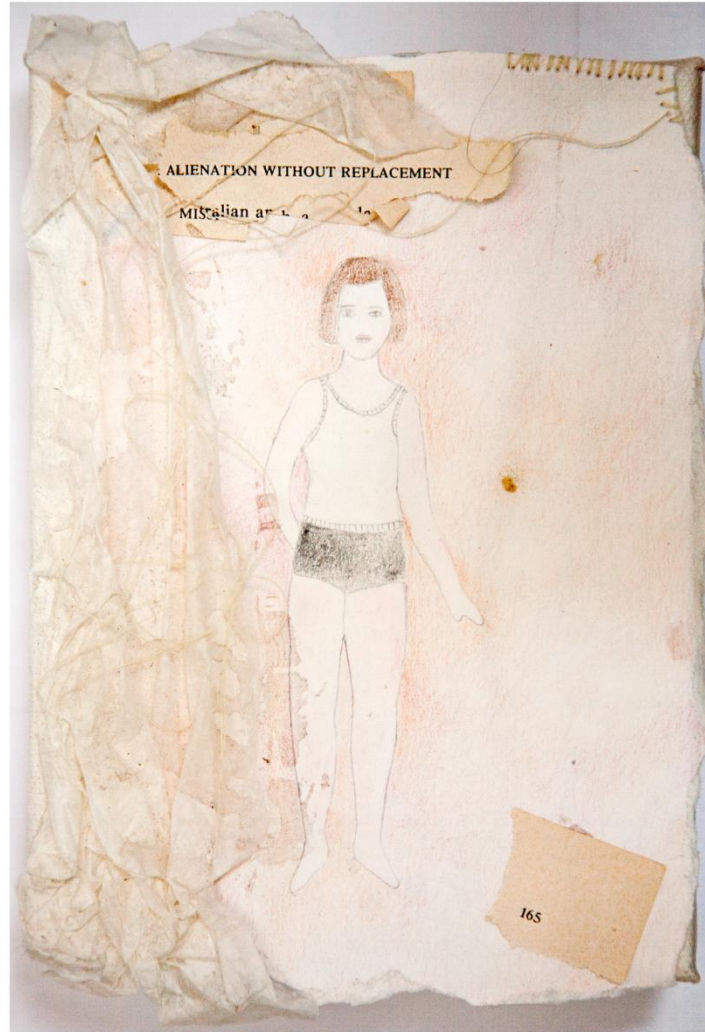


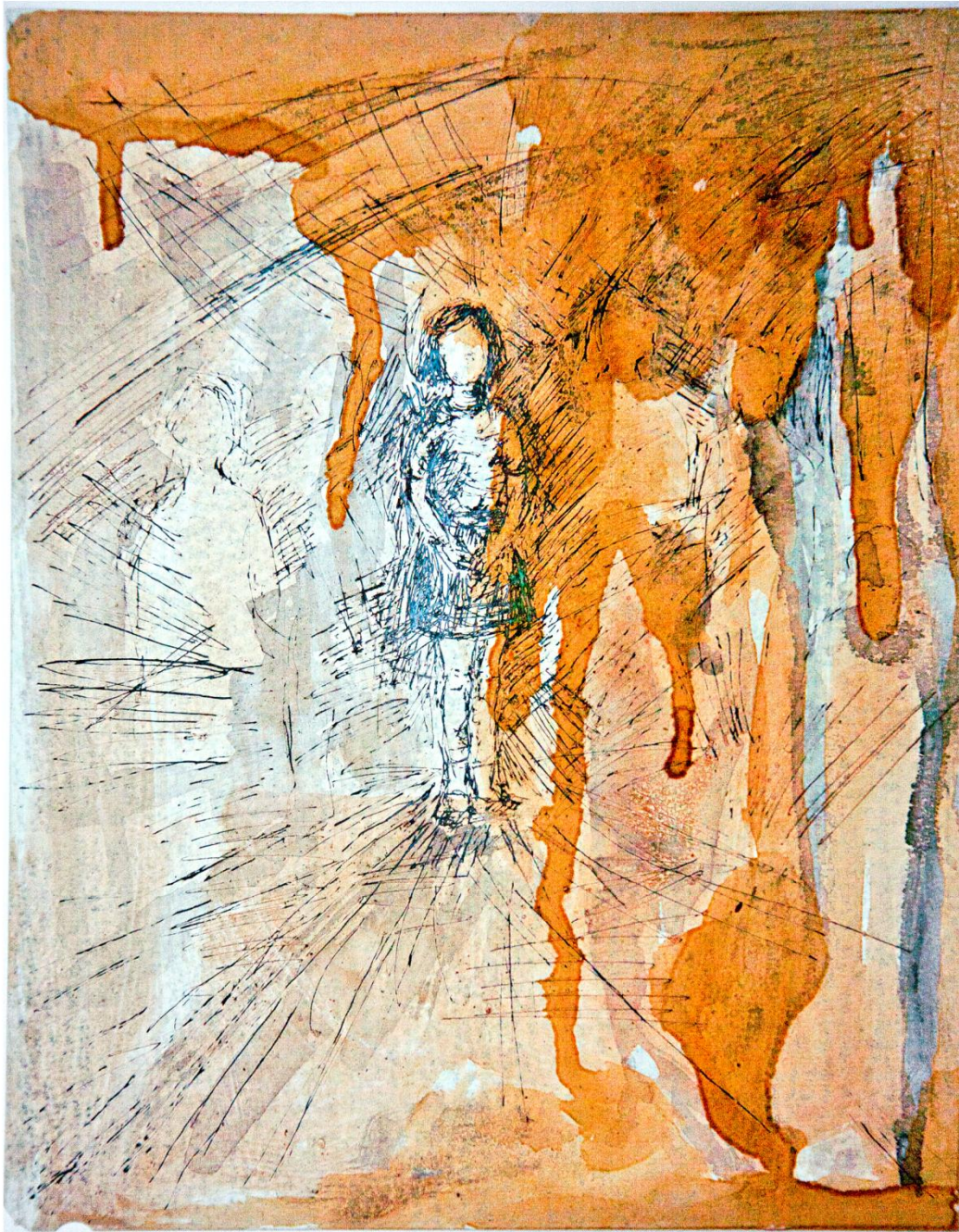








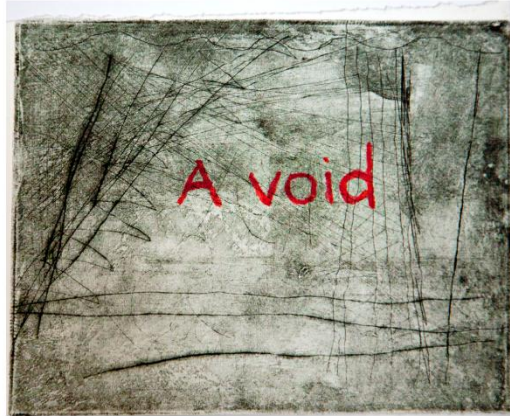




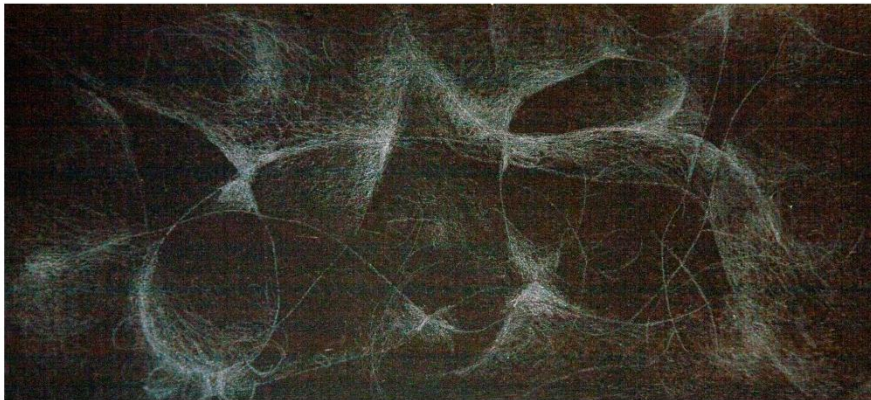
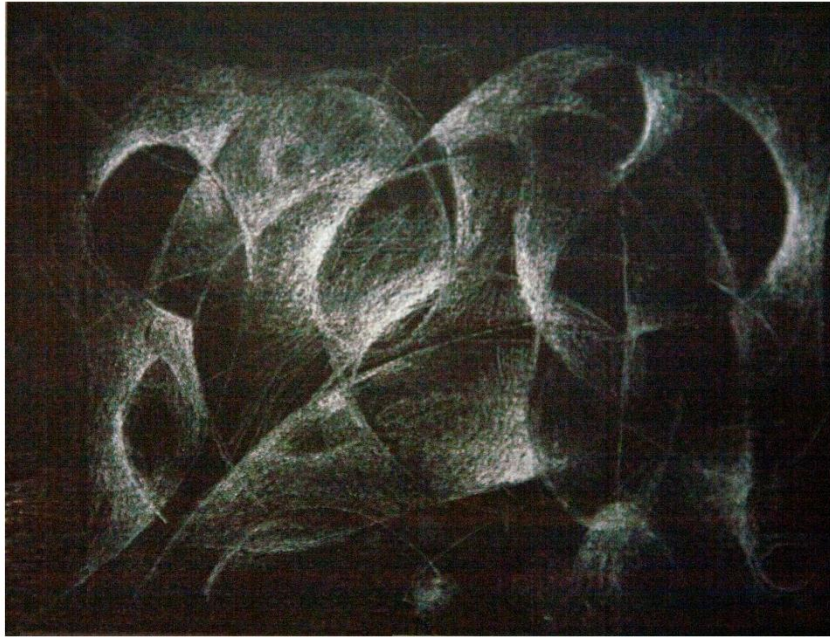


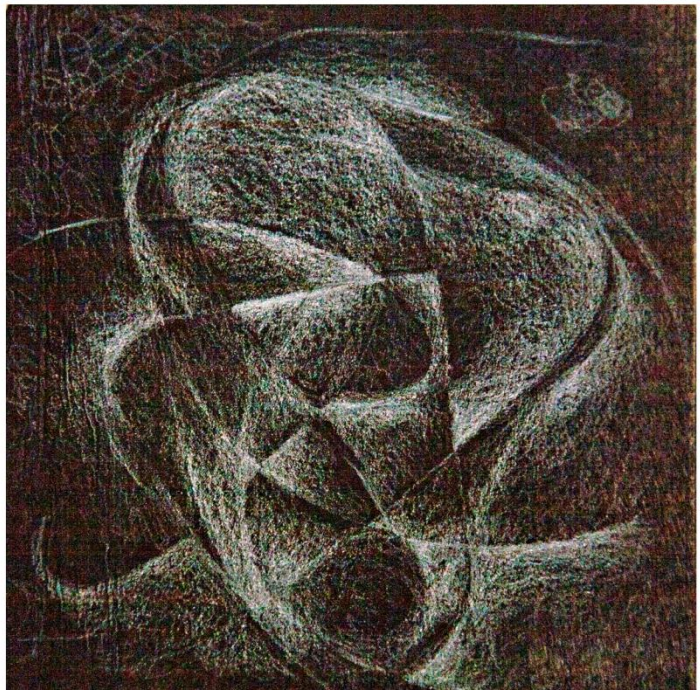


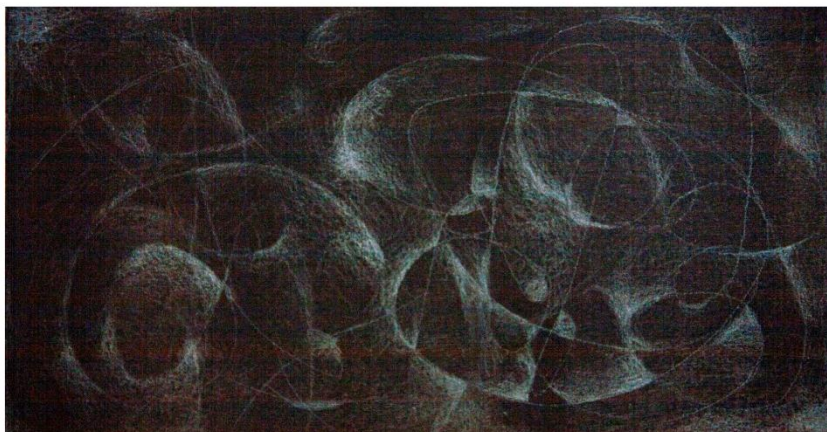
THEME 3



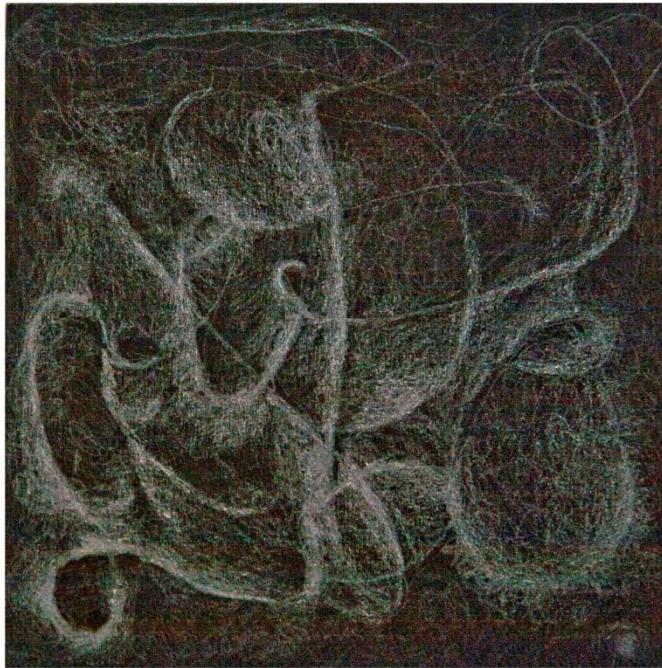




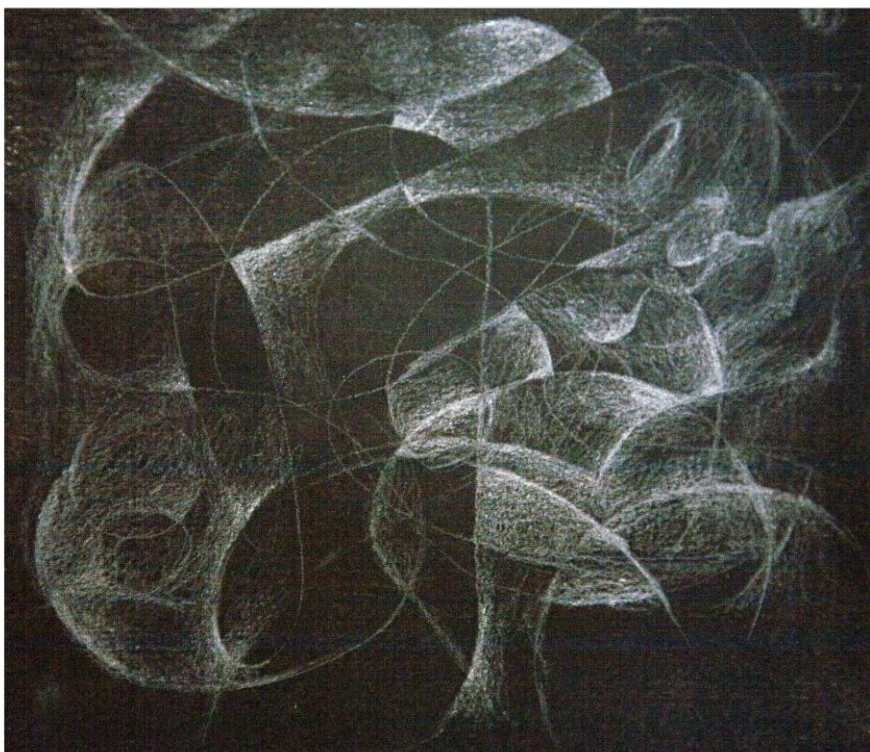
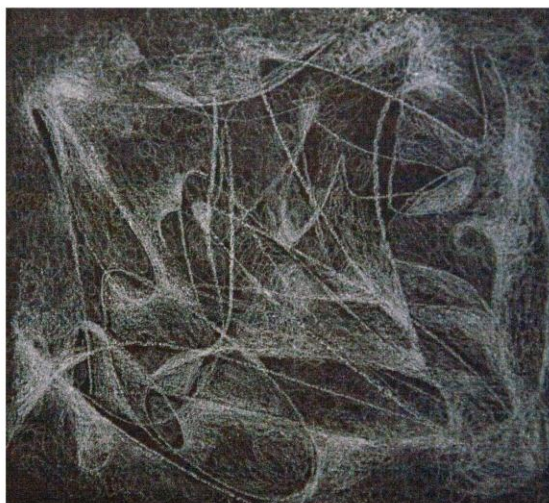












THEME 4

